

i am your boy

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i am your boy

by [GenOfEve](#)

Summary

There are many variations of the myths of fae.

Some describe them as ethereal beings, silver-tongued and magical. Others say that they are spirits of chaos, unpredictable, and deadly.

Both are correct.

Dream's a photographer for a nature blog he runs with his friend, Sapnap. All he wanted to do was photograph the birds in the woods behind the cabin.

Based loosely on the lyrics of the album, ZABA, by Glass Animals.

flip

Chapter Summary

here's to the one with the smoking stare
runnin through my head with a bolo knife
choppin up the threads made up from looms
of love and blood and hate and some empty tunes

Chapter Notes

this is the first chapter of my new work!!! it's all gonna be based off the track list of the album ZABA, by Glass Animals, which is of my favourite albums of the past few years!!!!
it's got a lot of very jungle-y, wet sounding themes throughout it's songs, and i HIGHLY recommend listening to the album. it's so different to some of their newer stuff (which is still good of course!) and it's just ugh beautiful

anyway, please enjoy!!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Deep in the woods, just off to the side of a long-forgotten hiking trail situated behind an old cabin, a hummingbird hovers by a trumpet-vine, peering curiously at each of the rosy-coloured, bell shaped flowers.

It selects one, and darts forward, peaking it's slender bill in toward the centre of nectar.

A camera shutter clicks rapidly.

Dream smiles at the small bird from his crouched position, and glances down at his camera display. His smile grows into a wide grin when he examines the photos, the stark contrast of hummingbirds ruby-red throat paired with the deep emerald colourations of leaves of the trumpet-vine and the surrounding foliage a sight to behold.

He looks up, just in time to see the hummingbird flit away, disappearing into the trees.

"*Man,*" he breathes, "This is *easily* the best work holiday ever."

The humidity of the air leaves a thin sheen of sweat on Dream's upper lip, while a gentle breeze chases away the lingering heat from the late afternoon sun, which filters softly through the canopy of the trees above him, illuminating the moss covered rocks, and various fungi that sprouts from

unlikely places.

Somewhere not too far off, he can hear the trickling of a stream, the babbling of the water as it rolls over clusters of stones and branches.

As he stands up from his crouched position, he fiddles with the settings of his camera, and idly wonders if Sapnap's progressed with the writing for the next article back at the cabin, or if he's still slowly going insane from the erratic behaviour of the internet signal.

*"Dream, you don't get it," He'd shaken his head, hands thrown up above his head in exasperation, "It's like, the second the sun starts to set, the signal just like, **drains**, man. Something's **weird** about it, I'm **telling** you."*

Dream calls him superstitious.

Sapnap lovingly tells him that he hopes Dream gets eaten by a bear while he's on the trail.

Jokes on him though, Dream's not on the trail. The best photos *never* happen on the trail.

A branch breaks nearby as he recalls the conversation, and Dream pretends the timing of it doesn't make him jump, as the shock causes him to fumble with his camera.

The camera thumps against his chest, the leather strap connected to it salvaging what would have been a very expensive disaster.

He swallows, takes a few deep breaths.

Tries not to think about bears.

He's thinking about bears.

Years of doing nature photography for the blog that he and Sapnap run, of *actually photographing bears*, and he still freaks out at every little noise.

To be fair, he thinks as he adjusts his strap, *nature is kinda terrifying.*

Another branch snaps, closer now, and Dream's eyes dart around frantically, and he doesn't bother to pretend he didn't jump this time.

He turns quickly, this way and that, searching for the source of the noise.

But the sound bounces underneath the canopy of green, echoing off every rock and every tree, until Dream finds himself growing dizzy with his frantic spinning.

He thinks it might be time to go back.

He doesn't bother to return the camera to his pack. He simply turns back, back toward the direction he knows the trail is in, and walks with the sun behind his shoulders, gripping the straps of his backpack out of something that is *definitely not fear, thank you very much*.

Okay, maybe just a little bit of fear.

It's after a long period of walking, leaves crunching under his feet, as the sun begins to dim to vibrant orange, that Dream stops. Frowns.

He should have reached the trail long ago by now.

He was *right* next to it, only a fifteen minute walk *easily*.

He blinks at the orange sun directly in front of him, as it strains through the leaves and branches, glares into his eyes, and his frown deepens.

*When had he started walking **west**?*

He turns around defiantly, counts his steps, focusing on anything except his thoughts, ensuring he doesn't slip on the damp leaf litter.

When he looks up, the sun is in his eyes again.

He stares at it a moment, ignoring the strain it causes.

Something moves behind him, quiet and gentle, barely disturbing the leaves on the ground, barely rustling the surrounding branches.

As he turns slowly, carefully, the camera gripped firmly against his racing heart like a makeshift source of protection, he sees it.

Sees *him*.

There isn't meant to be anyone out here, except for him and Sapnap. It's a private property.

But a fair-skinned, dark haired boy peeks out at him from behind the trunk of a cypress tree. *Watching*.

His clothes are somewhat ratty, a dark t-shirt faded with age and jeans too distressed to be for style purposes, and his feet are bare.

At first, Dream thinks he may be lost, too.

Or at least, maybe some kind of hippie.

”Hello,” He greets him cautiously, “I think I might be lost—?”

The boy tilts his head, and the sly, predatory movement of it makes Dream pause in confusion.

And then he *flickers*.

His whole body shifts, out of focus and Dream blinks.

The boy is gone.

No, not gone, Dream thinks suddenly, frantically, panicked, *definitely not gone, holy shit*.

There’s a fucking *blade pressed against his throat*.

Dream thinks he would have preferred a bear.

As Dream stares at the hand gripping the handle of the knife, trying not to move, or even *swallow*, he becomes aware that the boy’s skin isn’t just fair, he’s *shimmering, glowing, glistening* with the shifting angles.

It’s like he’s made of moonlight.

The long blade of the knife rests against Dream’s Adam’s apple, and he carefully flicks his gaze to the face of its owner.

A smoking gaze stares back at him.

The longer Dream stares into it, the colder he feels, an unsettling pit of *nothing* creeping into his bones. The feeling spreads, and Dream realises with a start that he can’t feel the ground underneath his feet anymore.

He can’t see the trees anymore either. It’s like he’s fading away, sucked into the void of those

black eyes.

Dream tears his eyes away, and the woodlands reappear as his vision spins, the dirt beneath his feet a welcome familiarity.

“You’re not from here,” the boy says, interrupting Dream’s chorusing thoughts of *what the fuck what the fuck what the fuck* and Dream blinks at the accent that shape his words.

“You’re not from here, either,” he says without thinking, before he scrunches up his face with distaste at his own sheer *idiocy*.

Oh sure, sass the dude with the big fucking knife against your jugular, good one, Dream.

He can feel the boy’s surprise at his disrespect, when the knife shifts a centimetre or two backward, as though he’s leaning back to look at him.

There’s a long second of silence.

And then the boy *laughs*.

Not an awkward chuckle, or uncertain giggle, no, an honest to god, shrill *laugh*.

He tugs the knife away to laugh *harder*, like it’s the funniest thing he’s ever heard, lowers his hand, the wide blade of the knife pointed to the ground.

Dream has never been so confused, or so *scared*, in his damn *life*.

““You’re not from here, either,”” the boy quotes mockingly, grinning at him, “Wow. I think I like you.”

“Uh,” Dream has no idea if that’s a good thing, “Thank you?”

The boy sits, suddenly, knife discarded to the leaves, grins up at Dream and *holy shit*—

His teeth look *sharp*.

Dream swallows, and the boy pats the ground in front of him as he crosses his legs, indicating for him to join him, sit down with him.

“Sit,” he demands excitedly, “It’s been so *long* since I’ve seen a *decent* human.”

In his excitement, his looks less predatory, less animalistic, but the way he says ‘*human*’ is unsettling, and as Dream cautiously sits, deciding it’s probably best to obey this— this *thing*, he asks—

“Do you have a name?”

“I have multiple,” the thing says, “But, I guess George works as well as any of the others.”

“You don’t seem like a George,” Dream scrambles, suddenly flustered, “You seem so— so *ethereal*.”

He settles on flattery, hoping it will settle the chaos of the creature.

“Was that actually a *compliment*?” The thing— *George*— offers him an almost soft, razor smile as the highs of his cheekbones go pink with a flush, “George was actually my *original* name. I haven’t used it in such a long time...”

As he looks skywards, Dream thinks that if it weren’t for the teeth, his expression would look gentle.

George’s expression hardens into something primal once more, and his eyes return to rest on Dream, before he inclines his head toward him in a questioning manner.

He wants his name.

“Oh, uh,” Dream shifts under this gaze, “Dream. I’m Dream.”

The smile slips from George’s face as he stares at him, pondering a moment, and then—

“You’d question my own name, and then *lie to me*?”

George scowls, and his hand twitches, faster than the wings of the earlier hummingbird, toward the handle of the knife once more and Dream *panics, rambles, stutters, realises—*

“No, uh— No, I guess— I guess I’m not, but— I— It’s not my real name, but I— It’s what I go by and,” the words are fumbled like the camera earlier, and eventually, he finds his grip, “I meant no offence by not telling you. I just— I don’t really use that name.”

Similar to a house-cat, George blinks slowly as he considers Dream’s words. His hand doesn’t drift away from the knife, hovers mere inches over the handle, unwavering.

“Will you tell me your original name, anyway?”

Dream hesitates. Something about the way George is so curious about it, the way he says ‘*original*’ like it’s important, unsettles him. He considers giving him a false name, until he remembers the twitch toward the knife, the primal rage at the reveal of ‘Dream’.

George can tell if he's lying, and a shudder crawls up his spine at the thought.

"I don't... I don't think I should," He murmurs eventually, "I'm not sure what you want it for."

Another peal of laughter pierces the air, bubbling from George's mouth from behind rows of dangerous teeth, and it's with a start, that Dream realises that the woods have grown silent.

There is no sound of the birds chirping, or distant frog song, no sound of the steps of animals as they drift amongst the trees.

Even the chorusing insects are quiet.

There is only George's laughter, against the eerie silence.

Everything is hiding.

With soft exhale, Dream accepts that he's possibly going to die, and likely, very quickly.

At least it won't be to a bear, though.

It's with that thought, that he hopes Sapnap doesn't look for him.

The acceptance of a quick death, however, makes him curious, a false sense of bravado falling over him like the slowly setting sun, the stickiness of the humidity settling into something softer, comforting.

"Did you turn me around? Earlier, when I was walking, I mean?" He asks suddenly and George continues to giggle.

He taps the side of his index finger against his smile gently, a universal gesture for *it's a secret*.

Dream takes it for a yes.

He wonders what else George can do, if he can twist his own sense of direction so easily.

"So, then, why do you have a knife?" Dream queries, when George's laugh dies down to a sigh, "I wouldn't think you'd need one, if you're..."

He trails off.

The word 'magic' feels childish to use, even though it seems to fit.

So he repeats George's gesture against his own lips, taps them gently, and George's eyebrows raise in delight. His smile remains, as he reaches out and taps the hardwood handle, which contrasts aggressively against his moonlight skin.

“I took it,” he says with pride, “From a man who tried to kill me with it.”

“Tried?” Dream croaks.

Jesus, how strong is this thing?

“Well, he actually thought he *had* killed me,” George rolls his eyes, a sneer appearing on his face, further darkening his already coal-black eyes, “Left me with it in my *neck*, thinking I would die. So I kept it, and I waited.”

George’s sneer shifts into another gleeful smile, an almost boastful tone to his words.

“Humans *always* come back to the scene of the crime, you know? So predictable. So I waited, waited, *waited*,” George grins, “I waited so long I grew bloody *moss* on my shoulders, I was *so* still and patient. And eventually, he came back.”

“Did you kill him?” Dream asks, his stomach twisting uneasily.

He already knows the answer.

“I took his *head*,” George claps his hands together, laughs at his achievement, “It was so *easy*, with him *drooling* in his sleep, like a *child*!”

He frowns suddenly, lifts a hand, slender fingers caressing the collar of his t-shirt.

“Such a shame though, what he did to me. I was so *pretty*.”

Dream tries not to flinch — *or vomit* — when he realises what he’s touching, swallows his shock at the sight of the long, jagged, purple scar that runs along George’s throat. George continues, his tone a soft melancholy.

“It’s only fair that I returned the favour.”

Dream’s thoughts are crowded, twisted like the strangler vines that hug the tree George leans against.

Maybe, if he does this right, doesn’t offend him, doesn’t give him a reason to hold a grudge, maybe, George will let him go.

He returns to flattery.

“You still—“ He swallows, “You still look lovely.”

George's gaze shifts to look him in the eyes. Switches from his soft human appearance to something more focused, more in tune.

Assessing him. Considering.

Looking for the lie.

And he won't find one, Dream thinks faintly, god, he's so fucked up.

The phrase 'flirting with danger' comes to mind.

George smiles again, but it's almost shy. Delicate. Just a brief quirk of the lips, with no sharp teeth, no harsh laughter.

He turns his head away as his cheeks flush pink again, the rosy colour paired wonderfully with the flowers of the trumpet-vines, and Dream thinks that here, in this moment of shyness, there's no trace of his primal, predatory side.

He's simply *human* in this moment.

"Dream," George softly interrupts Dream's contemplation, as he fingers the handle of the knife once more, his bottom lip resting gingerly between too-sharp teeth, "Do you like games?"

Chapter End Notes

i really hope you liked it!!!! it's definitely a bit different to my last fic

i really want fae!george to sort of have two sides - one that's more dangerous and chaotic, and one that's more like the him we're used to - his human side!! so hopefully I can get it to carry over

I'm not sure what my update schedule for this fic will be like, but I will try my best to update as frequently as I can <3

PS; i read, and eventually reply to, all the comments!!!!!! so if you leave some love i'll get to it eventually, don't worry!!

i adore you all x

black mambo

Chapter Summary

snake eyed
with a sly smile
he can hold you
and shake you dry

Chapter Notes

based off the second track!!! the opening to this song is this sort of eerie, creepy tune, yet still beautiful and sort of natural in theme!!! the lyrics reference a gamble between two animals, a risky sort of game, and I hope the atmosphere carries over!!

enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Do you like games?”

Dream blinks at the light, almost teasing lilt, to George’s words.

He doesn’t think he means Minecraft.

“What kind of games?” He asks, wary. George smiles at him, no teeth, just a soft, pink mouth quirked up at the corners, and Dream tries not to stare.

It’d be easier if George wasn’t so *uncomfortably* pretty.

As he fails his goal, and stares at the flush of pink that remains lingering from his earlier compliment, stares at the expanse of milky, glittered skin and silver veins underlie it, at the abyss of George’s gaze, and his wind-tousled hair, Dream wonders if it’s possible to be *too* pretty.

“How do you feel about a little wager?”

Dream doesn’t think he likes the idea of gambling with George.

But he’s far too afraid to tell him no.

“What would be playing for?” He asks, careful, cautious as he fidgets with the strap of his camera, trying to distract his nerves, keep his shaking hands busy.

He hears George hum, as his trembling hands are suddenly covered, George's moonlight skin resting atop the tan of his own.

The warmth of it shocks him, and he looks up, looks into George's eyes, meets his hypnotic stare.

The sun behind him has sunken further at some point. In several spots, the warm colour of it breaches the thick layers of the tree branches, of the emerald leaves and multiple colours of blooming, blossoming flora.

A beam of light shines directly into George's eyes now, his eyelashes lowered just the slightest to take the strain, as it illuminates the gaze that Dream had once thought was an icy black.

No, not black, he muses.

George's eyes are *brown*, deep and dark like the trunks of the surrounding trees, soft and rich like the fertile soil beneath them. They could appear warm, and soft, if it weren't for the unusual shape of their centre.

His pupils are thinned into a dangerous, vertical slit, cold and reptilian in appearance, barely noticeable against the darkness of his iris.

"An *experience*," George says, finally, snapping Dream out of the trance he'd found himself in, "If you win, I'll give you an experience that most humans could only *dream* of. *The dance of a lifetime*. I'll even let you *live*."

"And if you win?" Dream queries, the warmth of George's hands upon his own leaving him feeling dizzy, distracted, focused only upon the odd vibrating sensation that seems to be emanating from his palms.

"If *I* win," George's shark-like grin is back, "If *I* win, I get *you*."

Dream's mind is racing. He flits from one thought to another, never resting, never settled, *like a hummingbird checking each flower, like an insect examining the perfect place to land*. His nerves are on *fire*, a delicious mix of fear and intrigue lacing his thoughts as he begs himself to stop, *to think*.

This mischievous, lithe being, although smaller than him, although more slender and delicate in appearance, could *kill him with ease*.

Dream doesn't even think he'd need his 'borrowed' knife.

He'd just have to get those dangerous teeth near his throat and shake him, like predator with prey, just sink in and *shake*—

"So what'll it be? What shall we play, Dream?"

His voice cuts through Dream's thoughts again, certain and smooth.

He already knew he'd agree.

Already knew that Dream had the perfect game for them, tucked away in the depths of his backpack, underneath a water bottle and protein bar, underneath the bag that usually holds his camera, which still hangs precariously from his neck.

As Dream slowly tugs his hands free from George's clasp, reaching back to slip his pack from his shoulders, he becomes faintly aware that the sounds of the forest are beginning to return.

Quiet chirps of cicadas, the soft whistle of a bird to another, and somewhere, even the grunt of a deer makes its presence known.

The animals aren't hiding anymore.

Why would they be?

They're no longer the ones in danger.

Now, they watch, tittering amongst themselves, placing bets on what'll be the outcome of the game of choice, a game decided by its human participant.

Dream re-packs his camera, and then carefully tugs out a velvet bag from the depths of his pack. He places it carefully into George's outstretched, waiting palm, careful not to touch the warmth of his iridescent skin once more, lest he falls into another distracting, spiralling trance.

The breathy sound that escapes George's mouth as he peers into the bag, can only be described as delight.

He tips the contents of the bag, a set of thin, wooden dominos, into his hands, and begins to shuffle them, faster than Dream can even comprehend, the milky shade of his skin a soft blur against the background of the forest behind him.

The dominos are dealt.

The game begins.

Dream finds himself lucky enough to go first, a double-six domino present in his hand, and exhales a nervous breath as he places the smooth wooden tile, horizontal on the forest floor.

George twitches his toes to the song of the surrounding woods, to the animals that argue their bets amongst themselves, to the urgent babble of the nearby brook.

The sun continues to sink lower, as he places his tile.

The game continues.

About halfway through, Dream loses his focus.

It's hard not to, when a snake glides over the hiking boot on in his outstretched foot, a criss-cross pattern of bars stretched over it's length, various shades muted shades of brown painting its scales.

He flinches at the appearance of it, of the frightening sensation of it passing over the small area where his pants have bunched up, leaving his leg exposed, before he frowns, staring at the oddly familiar bars along its back, forgetting his next move as he fixates into the pattern, trying to remember—

“What's taking you so long?” George grins at him over a hand of dominoes, as he taps one against his nose, “Trying to *cheat*?”

The snake manoeuvres itself from across Dream's leg, gently sliding along the leaf litter before it coils around George's ankle.

George's accent echoes in his brain.

It clicks.

“No,” Dream says suddenly, “I'm not, but *you* are.”

“I'm *what*?” George asks, a bored sigh and a roll of his eyes punctuating his words.

“Trying to cheat,” Dream smiles at the coiled snake, “That's a European viper. They're not from here. I've photographed them before though, once when I visited *the United Kingdom*. So, I'm guessing it's not real, but it's very distracting, I'll give you that.”

Dream taps one of his own dominos against his nose, mimicking George's movements, as the snake uncoils, and slips into the nearby shrubbery.

George grins at him, all teeth and sharp angles.

“Smart,” he says, adjusting the dominos in his hand, “But you did get one thing wrong.”

Dream plays his turn, a double-one, and glances up into George's own snake eyes, as he says—

“They're *very* real to the mind.”

Dream tries not to think about what that means, or the unsettling feeling in his stomach.

The game continues.

They play on, one domino after another, smooth and simple, each move carefully thought out as the sun descends further and further behind them.

They play on.

Until—

Dream swallows, as he gazes down at the final domino in his hand.

He can't play it. There's no spot for it.

Oh no.

With a shaking hand, he reaches out, and taps on the forest floor, indicating his inability to play.

George's eyes flick from his shaking hand, to his own final domino, and he licks his lips, and he smiles, and Dream squeezes his eyes shut tight as the fear overtakes him and—

“I can't play, either.”

He winks one eye open.

And then the other.

Stares at the lone domino that George holds in front of his face, pinched between his slender fingers.

Eight dots stare back at him, and he frowns, counts them again.

Eight dots.

He counts them again.

Still eight dots.

He lifts up his own domino, holds it next to George's.

Seven dots.

He has less.

“You win.”

He's won.

He's actually fucking won.

George is laughing at the stunned expression on his face, grinning despite his loss, and a split second of confusion teases at Dream's relief, because *why is he so pleased?*

He lost, so why—

George tugs the dominos from him, fingers grazing against his own, a burst of energy passing along the touch, distracting him from his curious thoughts.

He drops the dominos back into the velvet drawstring bag with the others, lets it tumble to the earth as he releases it, leans forward, and presses his palms against either side of Dream's face, cupping his cheeks and laughing still, and Dream stares into those dark snake-eyes of his, *lost*.

The energy from George's palms sings against his skin, sending something that feels like liquid gold into his bloodstream, *something warm and delectable*, as George leans in and brushes his nose shyly against Dream's, eyes still open wide as he grins.

Dream closes his eyes as he does so, relishing in the sensation, the fear of *danger, risk, predator*, only increasing his pulse, increasing the speed at which the sensation spreads through his veins.

“Are you ready?” George asks, pulling his face away, but still maintaining his gentle hold.

Dream can hardly think through the sound of his own pulse, through the burning touch of George's hands.

*If he says yes, he ponders weakly, he might die. What if he isn't ready, and by agreeing, he lies?
But what if by saying no, he offends him, and in doing so, he also dies?*

They sit like this, bathed in an orange glow, with only a couple of hours of daylight left between them, as Dream hesitates.

Dream hesitates, and he thinks about shark teeth behind soft, rosy mouths, of electric palms with glowing skin.

Dream hesitates, and he says—

“Please.”

Chapter End Notes

phew, sorry this update took longer than expected!!! I have been EXHAUSTED like honestly who gave the holiday season THE RIGHT

i really really hope that you guys enjoyed this though! and I hope you're having a lovely December!!!

Remember: if you comment, I'll almost always reply eventually!!!! I adore your comments so much <33

ps: if you need a more instant response, or have a question about something, my tumblr is also GenOfEve!! I get notifications for that one, so I'm more likely to reply straight away!!

pools

Chapter Summary

put the flowers in your hair
wrap your tendrils round my chest
i smile because i want to
i am your boy

Chapter Notes

track 3 of zaba is 'pools' and it is my FAVOURITE track of all time!!! this is up there with one of my favourite glass animals songs, and my favourite songs in general, which is why it was lucky enough to help name the title of this fic.

pools has this deep otherworldly feeling to it, it's this kind of track that really pulls you in and begs your whole attention, and the lyrics of it are just - wow. it tells this absolutely insane story, and it also has one of the coolest video clips I've ever seen - it's claymation and it's BEAUTIFUL. go watch it!!!!!!

i hope I can give off the same vibes with this chapter <3

ps; there is a very very brief mention of accused drug use at the end of this chapter, but that's about it rly!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Please."

The deep orange sunset is now shot through with purples, a smoky haze of blues and greys tinting the clouds that sit high above them.

The sun will be set, soon.

If Dream doesn't leave before then, he won't be able to see.

Won't be able to find his way out.

He can feel George's gaze on him as he leads him deeper into the forest, watching him, assessing him. Dream pauses in his pondering of the sun, and offers him a smile.

He wouldn't want George to think he was ungrateful, for whatever he was about to give him, wouldn't want him to be displeased, upset or angry.

So he offers him a smile, and resists the urge to flinch when George offers a harsh smile back, all sharp teeth and crooked fangs, and grabs his hand suddenly, tugs him hard toward a nearby clearing.

The creek that Dream has been able to faintly hear for so long, comes into vision next to it.

There's only a few inches of water in it as it flows steadily onward, and Dream wonders if perhaps somewhere it connects to the river he'd seen documented on his map.

He stumbles on the rocks, pillowed with moss, on the slippery, damp ground, his pack thumping unsteadily. against his back, and George steadies him with a laugh.

George does not stumble.

He *glides*, so elegant and perfect along the unstable terrain, not a step out of place, and Dream can't help the embarrassment of feeling so inferior, *so human*, when he stands next to him.

George moves away, stands a couple feet in front of him and he takes his stance, his feet shoulder-width apart, and his shoulders squared as he indicates for Dream to copy him.

The dance of a lifetime.

Dream just hopes he can keep his footing.

"It's tradition that we would offer one another a gift," George says thoughtfully, as Dream copies his stance carefully, "But I guess this isn't a very traditional setting, anyway."

Dream can pick out the disappointment that laces his humorous excuses, *the almost sad tones that linger in his broken expectations*, and he hesitates, eyes drifting to a young dogwood tree, in bloom almost a foot above their heads.

The sadness in George's facial features *overwhelms* him.

Carefully, he selects a flower, one that is ready to fall naturally, and plucks it from the tree, before tucking it gently behind George's ear.

It's aged appearance seems to disappear, the second it is nestled amongst George's hair.

The deep pink colour of the dogwood's bracts, of the false petals that surround the tiny yellow flowers within, pairs wonderfully with the bloom that spreads across his cheeks, and the delicate

rosy colour of his mouth.

Dream clears his throat, and gestures with a nod toward the flower.

“A gift,” he says, nervously, awkwardly, afraid, “For the dance.”

“A man of many tricks,” George smiles at him, soft and gentle, repeating the gesture and tucking a flower behind Dream’s own ear, “I like that.”

There is no trace of the sadness now, and briefly, Dream wonders if it was some sort of test, a ruse, *a trick*.

As George adjusts the flower, cheeks still deliciously pink, Dream tries not to think about the things he’d do for that gentle smile.

George takes a step back, and reaches forward, clasping Dream’s hands in his own.

“Everyone’s waiting,” he says, that sharp smile returning, “We should probably begin.”

Everyone?

Dream feels his spine prickle at the watchful gaze of *something*, but as he turns his head toward the thick foliage the sensation seems to emanate from, George reaches up, and, gripping his chin lightly, turns his gaze back toward him.

“Don’t *look*, you’ll *scare* them,” he scolds, “They’re *shy*. You’ll see them soon enough, I *promise*.”

The soft smile is back when he releases Dream’s jaw, and returns to gently clasping at his hands.

He tips his head forward in a bow, and Dream mimics him carefully, feeling the flower behind his ear rustle with the breeze.

The dance begins.

Dream pays close attention to George’s fluid movements, copying them to the best of his ability, trying not to be distracted by the raw electricity that seems to be humming from George’s fingertips, or the fine mist of glitter that has begun to linger in the air like dew-drops.

They step toward each other, chest to chest, before stepping backwards again, repeating the steps before George lifts his arm, and Dream finds himself being twirled as he manoeuvres under the arm, before being twirled backward into his original position.

With each step, the woods seem to get louder, birds and cicadas crying out, while frogs and toads

croak in unison, until they have become an endless cacophony of sounds, a chorus of cries and chirps *deafening* him as George spins Dream one more and he, *he*—

He lets him go.

Dream gasps as he spins, and the world around him begins to *melt*.

The pattern of the bark on the dogwood tree seems to crawl and drift, it's branches inhaling and exhaling in time with the large glowing trunk of a nearby conifer tree, the strangler fig around it expanding and sliding with the noise of the forest.

The dogwood flowers colours are slowly changing, fading into an impossible bright, cyan blue with each inhale of the branches, returning to their vibrant pink on the exhale, their false petals opening and closing in time of the drums— *the drums*—

Oh god. He can hear drums.

The flowers wink at him. The forest is *alive*.

A hand catches his free one suddenly, it's leathery texture stealing his attention, and he glances back at it, his eyes widening at the scaled texture, *at the raised bumps and lumps, at the dark, almost-black, mossy colouring, at the claws*.

He looks up at his new partner.

An alligator snarls at him, a clicking, growling sort of hiss, blinks it's yellowed eyes, and he *screams*, and he is being spun again, twirled away into the hands of—

George.

George laughs at him, raw excitement colouring his boyish face.

“Can you see them?” He asks, glee soaking his words, “*They must like you!*”

George spins him again, and as his hand slips away, Dream realises that his face is different.

His teeth are straight, and his eyes no longer have their serpentine appearance. His pupils are

blown wide.

Human.

Dream is still spinning, when suddenly, there's a hand on his pack, pushing hard against him, *shoving*, and he *slips*.

He slips, toward the creek, and he braces himself for the pain, for the possible broken bones that will occur when he breaches the mere inches of water, when he collides with the smooth stones, and broken branches.

The surface of the water breaks.

His bones do not.

His eyes fly open at the shock of the freezing water.

With the blurriness of his vision, he can just make out the messy whirls of mangrove roots, along with tangles of stringy, tape grass, and, growing further along the river floor, the tiny rounded traps and thin, green offshoots of the carnivorous bladderwort plant.

As a dark mass shifts some feet in front of him, he wonders if perhaps George left him to his fate, let him drift downstream with his alligator partner, or if perhaps he's dead or dying, and this is all some vivid hallucination, brought on by exposure.

His lungs are burning.

The dark mass is closer now, and Dream can make out the shape of the alligator.

He wishes George had killed him first.

Something tugs him from the water, *hard*, and he inhales, coughs and splutters at the presence of water in his lungs, stumbles blindly in the darkness of the forest, as somebody gently brushes a kiss to his knuckles.

The darkness of the forest.

God.

How long have they been dancing?

His eyes adjust to the darkness, and he can just make out the glowing skin of George as he shakes the flower from his hair, laughing and smiling at him, oh-so gentle, as he prepares to spin Dream once more.

Dream's stomach dips in fear.

"No," he begs as he chokes on river water, the dizzying confusion and the melting forest all too much for his fragile mind, "No, no, *no—!*"

He is spun again.

A faun's hooves gently scrabble at his hands, it's soft brown eyes reminiscent of George's almost human gaze throughout the dance.

He is spun again, and he stumbles, queasy, stomach spinning along with him, twirling faster and faster.

Until—

The silky paws of a great cat rasp at his hands. Her sharp stare greets him, and he yells in fear, in *pain*, as she suddenly pushes at his chest, *pushes him backward*, her long claws shredding the thin, wet material of his t-shirt.

He runs.

He twists his ankle on the damp leaf litter.

He slips.

He falls.

The drums stop.

He comes to, spitting dirt and leaves from his mouth, gagging at the taste of earth and rot, and he vomits, expunging himself of the river water he had swallowed.

He heaves, taking gasping breaths of air as he glances around, desperately, frantically, trying to

figure out— *Who? What? When? Where?*

His pack is next to him, bone dry in comparison to his own soaked skin.

He can't remember his own name.

The afternoon sun lights his way.

He's on the edge of the tree line. He can see a cabin from here, and he shakingly pushes himself upward, hissing at the sharp, tearing pain that pulses outward from his chest.

His muscles ache.

From behind him, the forest sings. It *begs* him to come back.

On a throbbing ankle, he decidedly stumbles away from the call of the woods, down the grassy hill, and toward the cabin.

Somebody sees him through the window.

The door is flung open as he *collapses*, and this somebody swears at him, yells at him, scolds him, the sour tang of fear and anger a foundation for his words as he struggles to hold him upright, lug his deadweight form toward the couch.

He can hardly hear him. He wonders if he's still in the river.

The world floods back to him suddenly, when a harsh, chemical pain floods along his chest, burning hot and angry. As he shouts in pain, jolts upright, he realises that at some point, this somebody has cut his shirt open, fetched a first aid kit, and has begun applying antiseptic to the wounds he bears.

“— quit moving, man! Are you *listening to me, Dream?*”

His name is *Dream*.

This somebody is *Sapnap*.

Oh god. How did he forget?

Dream turns his gaze toward him, finally paying attention to his friend's presence as he behaves, and doesn't twist away from the burning chemicals.

“Did you actually get attacked by a fucking *bear*, dude? What *is* this?”

“Alligator,” Dream murmurs, trying desperately to remain conscious, to not slip away once more, “No, wait— Mountain lion.”

He hesitates, shivering at the damp feeling of his clothes.

“*Both*,” he decides.

“What the fuck do you *mean, both?*” Sapnap’s voice is distance again as he smears some kind ointment over the claw marks, “We’re too far north for mountain lions, man, there’s no *way*—”

“I *saw it*—”

“*They’re very real to the mind.*”

George’s unusual statement echoes in his mind, and Dream flinches.

Sapnap stares at the long marks on Dream’s chest, as he pulls the skin together with the adhesive on the butterfly stitches.

Dream knows he’s thinking about the article they did on big cats just a year ago, when they’d documented the different claw marks different cats had left on trees as they’d climbed, hunted, prowled, *pushed*—

“Okay, Dream,” Sapnap murmurs, and it’s the closest thing to an ‘*I believe you*’ that Dream will get, because he *knows* how insane it is, “But, are you *sure* you didn’t like, eat some kind of— I don’t know— *mushrooms*, or some shit, or like—”

“Why the *hell* would I—”

“I’m just asking, man,” Sapnap holds up his hands, on the defence, “You’re sweating like fucking crazy, and your eyes— they don’t look right.”

He sighs, returns to tugging the wounds on Dream’s chest closed.

“These are pretty gross, and you’ll have to make sure they don’t get infected, but you’re probably just lucky they aren’t any deeper,” he murmurs, “We’re a long drive from town, so I probably would have had to bust out my street knowledge of stitches.”

Dream winces at the idea of Sapnap wielding a needle and thread, and his friend chuckles at his expression.

“Yeah, I know right?” Sapnap shakes his head as he stands up, “I don’t know how the hell you

managed to get yourself in this much trouble in such a short amount of time.”

Dream frowns at that.

Hasn't he been gone since yesterday?

He'd danced for *so long*...

“What do you mean?”

“You only left a few hours ago,” Sapnap muses from the nearby kitchen, “Sun’s only just starting to set. Hope you got some cool photos at least.”

Dream glances out the window behind his friend's head, at the treeline that calls to him, at the familiar setting orange sun above the woods, and winces as Sapnap applies a bag of frozen peas to his twisted ankle.

“Sap,” he whispers weakly, “Is the internet still messing up?”

“Huh? Oh, that,” Sapnap snorts, adjusting the placement of the makeshift ice-pack, “Of *course* that’s what you’re worried about. It usually starts up around this time, yeah. I’ll show you, and you can see for yourself. I *swear*, it’s like it’s being *drained* by something.”

Something soft and pale, almost like moonlight, glimmers outside the window, by the edge of the forest.

“Yeah,” Dream slurs, giving in to the exhaustion, “I believe you.”

He smiles as he drifts away.

Chapter End Notes

this chapter was so FUN to write holy shit I had it planned out in my head for WEEKS
You have no idea!!!

i'm so glad to have it all out now!!! and I really hope you all enjoyed it!!!

I look forward to your lovely comments and messages as always!!! <3

gooey

Chapter Summary

hold my hand and float back to the summer time
tangled in the willows, now our tongues are tied
how can i believe you, how can i be nice?
tripping round tree stumps in your summer smile

Chapter Notes

track four is GOOEY!! this is one of the more well known songs off of zaba, and coins the term 'peanut butter vibes' oh so well

it's a, for lack of a better term, very wet sounding song, very, well, gooey!!!

as per usual i have no beta so please forgive me for any spelling or grammatical errors
lmao i swear one day i'll fix these silly little fics of mine up properly ugh

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When Dream wakes up on the couch the following morning, shoeless and bandaged, *thank god for Sapnap*, it feels like he's pushing through syrup.

The air feels thick and heavy when he tries to sit up, and each movement is an effort to maneuver through the honey soaked air.

He struggles with his thoughts, as he limps to the bathroom, the decision to brush his teeth almost impossible to reach, despite the obvious foul taste in his mouth.

His thoughts push through their own sugary goo, as he stares blankly at his toothbrush on the basin, at the vibrant shade of lime green painting it's accents.

It clicks, after a minute of painful, strained attempts to *just think, dammit, what's wrong with you*, and he sighs in relief as he reaches out to apply toothpaste to the worn down bristles of the brush.

As he gradually tugs the toothbrush through the gooey air, muscles aching, he glances up at the mirror above the sink.

The toothbrush falls from his hand with a clatter, and he yelps in a combination of surprise and pain as he leaps back, the motion tugging at the strips that hold his chest together, like the glue that pieced together his favourite coffee mug, or the tape wrapped around one arm of Sapnap's well-loved reading glasses.

As he stumbles on the landing, jarring his already aching ankle, he thinks he feels well-loved himself, as a pair of eyes, one a familiar olive, and one *serpentine*, stare at him from the mirror.

His eyes.

“—*your eyes—they don't look right*—“

Sapnap's concerns echo in his head as he carefully leans forward, examining.

No, not quite serpentine.

The pupil of the eye in question seems to ebb and flow, morphing in shape, stretching from round, to thin, altering between his own human eyes, and eyes that look like—

George's.

He blinks. Shakes his head.

Normality resumes.

Two green eyes stare at him. He heaves a shaky sigh. Returns to brushing his teeth with syrupy, slow and heavy movements.

He gradually works up the effort to wipe over the filthy, grime and mud that cakes his skin, run a damp, soapy rag over his extremities, avoiding his many scrapes and bandages.

He stares at the way the colour of his bruises seem to *pulse*, flickering between deep purple clouds, blue pools, green moss, and back again.

He splashes water on his face.

Normality resumes once more. He limps back to the couch.

Sleeps for almost another full 24 hours.

His body needs it. His mind needs it more.

He's roused by Sapnap shaking a bottle of something blue in his face, an electrolyte sports drink, which he accepts weakly, as well as what he assumes are two chalky painkillers.

The syrupy, cloudy feeling is gone.

He almost misses it, as Sapnap begs him for the whole story, now that Dream's coherent and conscious again. He doubts Sapnap would believe him. He tells him so.

Sapnap hesitates. He disappears out of his vision, ducking into the study, Dream guesses from the direction of his footsteps, and returns, holding Dream's camera.

"I think I might," Sapnap murmurs, holding the camera out, angled for Dream to see the display screen, "Dream... *What are these?*"

Dream's first motion is to be insulted. He was *proud* of those photos of the hummingbird, and some earlier ones of butterflies and other insects.

But then he looks. *Really* looks, as Sapnap slowly flicks through the images, one by one.

The first few photos are shaky shots of the foliage, the blurry focus of an amateur photographer, nothing like Dream's practiced stills.

The next photo is of a faun. It bends its neck to drink from the few inches of water in the creek, the few inches that Dream had stood next to when—

—hooves gently scrabble at his hands, its soft brown eyes reminiscent of George's almost human gaze—

The faun stares at the camera, unafraid. It is completely aware of the cameraman, yet it remains steady in its drinking.

The camera beeps as Sapnap pushes a button.

Dream is staring at his own back. He's missing his backpack.

He stands in the hip-deep water of a river. A river so familiar, and yet, different.

—he can just make out the messy whirls of mangrove roots—

Where the water was crystal clear, here is a murky, sand-bottom river, its waters a soft, pale

brown. Despite the murkiness, Dream has no doubts that he would find tape grass, and bladderwort lining the bottom of it.

Beep.

The next photo is of him again. His back is still to the camera, but the shot is zoomed in, and right in front of him, is the dark, mossy coloured body of an alligator, it's snout hovering above the water as it idles, examining him carefully.

— a clicking, growling sort of hiss, blinks it's yellowed eyes, and he screams—

Beep.

In the last photo, the cameraman is revealed.

The top half of George's head is in the forefront of the shot, his skin glistening from the flash as he looks over his shoulder, at a large, shadowed mass of graceful muscle, resting in the bough of a low branch.

The mountain lion stares at him through the lens. His chest *burns*.

—The silky paws of a great cat rasp at his hands. Her sharp stare greets him, and he yells in fear, in pain, as she suddenly pushes at his chest—

Dream takes the camera in his trembling hands, and flicks through each picture again.

Each photo is littered with orbs, scattered around the shapes of the animals, or of his own human body. Paired with them is a soft, smoky mist. It appears to almost be made of light.

"Dream, these photos," Sapnap points at the text in the corner, "They're all taken *after* you got home. Four in the morning, *two days later*. Dream, what did you *see*? What happened to you?"

Dream tells him.

He tells him how the animals stood on their hind legs and *danced with him*, how he fell into the creek, only for it to be a river, tells him of the trees *breathing* as they watched him.

Sapnap just listens.

Listens to the rambling of his friend, gone mad, with no judgement.

He's good like that.

"And him?" He says, finally, "Who's he?"

He taps the display photo, where Dream has zoomed in on the top half of George's head.

"George," Dream whispers, "He's not... Like us."

"How so?"

"I don't think he's human. Or, he was, once maybe."

"Yeah," Sapnap taps the display again, taps the image of George's eyes, illuminated by the flash, "I gathered that."

The vertical slits stare up at them.

"Is he— Is he dangerous?" Sapnap queries, searching for the correct word.

"*Definitely*," Dream hesitates, despite the certainty of his affirmation, "But— Like, not always. When he is, it's like he's not himself. Something more," he hesitates once more, "Primitive. Animal. He's good, though. He *wants* to be good—"

There's a sigh.

"Oh, Dream, no—"

"What?"

"You're seriously falling in love with a character straight out of a story book," Sapnap chuckles, rubs at the back of his head nervously, "And it's *Where The fuckin' Wild Things Are*."

"No— No way," Dream shakes his head, regrets it when it feels like his mind *rattles*, "I only knew him for—"

The time stamp glares at him.

"Two days, apparently," he swallows, "But, still— like— give me some credit."

He says this.

He says this, but he can't take his eyes off George, off his abyssal gaze, off his moonlight skin.

Off the familiar pink of a dogwood flower, tucked behind George's ear.

Sapnap is understandably pissed off when he catches Dream in the study the next day, packing a bag.

Dream bites back anyway.

"We have a whole *month*," Dream argues as he carefully places the camera bag into his pack, "A whole month to *work*, so I might as well be—"

"Not *only* are you a walking risk for literal *sepsis*, and practically *disabled* with that ankle, you are an *idiot*."

Dream wants to argue against that too, opens his mouth to do so, and Sapnap bowls over him, face turning pink with irritation.

"No— no!" He gestures at Dream wildly, "*Look* at yourself! What if that mountain lion comes back, or a *bear*—"

"So, I'll *photograph* it," Dream says with a smirk at the exasperated *shriek* Sapnap lets out, "Kinda my job."

Sapnap's anger twitches in his face as he fumbles at Dream's comeback, but he continues.

"And what about *him*? That *thing*?"

"*George*," Dream stresses his name, "Only came out when the sun started going down. It's dawn. I've got time."

He faintly hopes he's wrong about that. Hopes he's so, so wrong, as he misses the syrupy air that lingers in George's presence.

He's not getting anywhere with this. He pulls out the big guns.

"Do you remember that Nat Geo article? The one about how otters can take down alligators?" Sapnap *fucking loves this article*, "You went on and on about it for *weeks*, about how you wanted to do this piece, on— on—"

"...The living arrangements of otters and alligators."

"Yes!" *He's got him*, "There's meant to be otters here, and we *know* there's gators, so what if I got you photos of—"

Sapnap *wails*. Throws his hands up in defeat, exasperation, *loss*.

“Fine!” He grumbles, slumps down in the swivel chair by the desk, opens his laptop with *force*, “Go out and get mauled to death, but I’m *not* bandaging you back up, *and* I get to say I told you so.”

Dream is true to his word, and he does get *some* work done, limping along the river bank, photographing the glossy, black alligators from a safe distance

None of them have the olive sheen like the one in George’s photo, the one from his blurry, twisted memories.

He photographs young otters as they snarl, and play nearby, leaping in and out of the water, gliding over one another with grace and ferocity. The proof of otters in the same area of the gators is promising, and he absolutely plans on holding it over Sapnap’s head so he can return another time.

He pauses, taking a sip of water.

“The forest said you’d come back—“

He *chokes, splutters, coughs*.

George laughs from the branches above him, slipping down as graceful as the otters, like he weighs nothing.

“The forest said you’d come back, but I didn’t believe it...”

He gingerly reaches out, runs a finger over the areas of Dream’s chest that are swollen with bandages, and Dream leans into his humming touch, *obsessed*.

“Not after this happened. I didn’t want you to get hurt,” he hums quietly, “It’s a mistake I’ll own up to, unlike others.”

“How—“ his voice shakes, “How do I know you won’t hurt me again?”

George blinks at him.

Brown eyes. Rounded pupils.

Human.

“Because you make me want to be human.”

The corner of his lips quirk up.

No sharp edges. Soft, gentle.

Human.

“And I can try to be human,” He continues as he leans in, the syrupy sensation pushing around them, emanating off of him in waves as he brushes his nose against Dream’s, “After all, I *am* human. Sometimes.”

The words echo.

“—*You make me want to be human.*”

George’s lips graze his own, and the forest melts away once more as Dream inhales his exhale, inhales syrup, inhales sticky, sugary air, pushing through as he nudges himself forward, onward, craving as George gently nips at his lips, licks the non-existent wound he leaves.

The words echo.

“—*I can try to be human.*”

He surges forward, swipes at George’s tongue with his own, his shaking hands clinging to his rotted t-shirt, fingers slipping through old holes and grazing at the moonlight skin beneath, gripping at a slim waist as he *shudders*.

The words echo.

“—*I am human.*”

George tastes sweet, like honeycomb pried fresh from a hive, but also *earthy*, like sap fresh from a maple tree, an underlying taste of *something* Dream can't place as he kisses him harder, deeper, *darker*, relishing in the almost whimpered breaths he takes from George with each movement, each kiss, each caress, *each lick, each bite*—

The words echo.

"Sometimes."

He pulls back, pulls out of the syrupy trap of the air, the sensation like *tar*, the question *thick* as it pushes out of him.

"You need to tell me what you mean."

Chapter End Notes

one time my friends and i went camping and i was super hungover and this girl asked how i was feeling and i said "very where the fucking wild things are" and that is what inspired that line lmao

i really hope you guys are liking this story!!!! it's so challenging to write, but i'm having fun, and i hope you all are too <3

i love you guys, stay safe, and remember: don't make out with strange cute men in the woods

walla walla

Chapter Summary

honey honey, don't you cry
it's a ruse
all these creatures are a lie
funny bunny, it's alright
i clap my hands
and they're gone into the night

(take my hand, take my hand)

Chapter Notes

walla walla is number five!! and this is All Dialogue fuc

a warning; there is a brief mention of violence and some gore so be mindful!!!!

i still have no beta (as always) and my proofreading kinda sucks bc my brain just goes
brrrrr so i still miss some issues and shit sometimes sorry haha!!

enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“It was an accident, you know.”

The two sit side by side, underneath the shade of a familiar dogwood tree, it's boughs of pink and green ever sovibrant above their heads.

Dream leans against the tree, letting it take the weight of his aching muscles, while George sits cross-legged next to him, picking at the discarded flowers that litter the ground. Each one he picks up regains its once-fresh appearance, as though it was never dying to begin with.

The creek trickles nearby, filling the silence between George's words as he hesitates, thinking of how to continue, how to broach the topic of *what he is*.

He tries again. Dream listens.

“I was twenty-four,” he murmurs, raising his eyebrows as a sarcastic chuckle passes his lips, “I still *am* twenty-four. Time passes differently for me.”

Dream thinks of the time stamps on George's photographs, *of the darkness in the melting forest as he stumbled, of the endless setting sun as Sapnap bandaged his wounds.*

"You've figured that out already though," George confirms, "You're smart, of course you have."

George smiles at him, soft and human. He continues.

"I was twenty-four, and I had a lot of friends. We weren't all that close though, I guess. I didn't go out often," he chuckles again, "I was an extroverted introvert, I guess."

He sighs, and it's a mournful, hollow sound, nothing like the frantic giggles, or the primal displays of rapid cycling emotions Dream is used to seeing.

It's a sad, lonely sigh, and the sound of it sinks into Dream's bones, and leaves them cold and shaking.

He rubs at his shoulder absently, the motion tugging on his injured chest, the pain chasing away the cold with a burning heat as he waits for George to go on. He waits patiently, listening carefully to his honeyed voice.

"Anyway, we thought it would be fun to book this holiday cabin. Just a few of us. Five, including me, if I remember right."

Five?

There are four bedrooms in the cabin, five, if you count the study—

"It's the same cabin, stop thinking so loud," George laughs at him, at his face pinched in thought, and Dream flushes, rubs at his neck embarrassed at being caught, but George moves on, "We had it for a week. On the second day, someone suggested we drive out to the town a ways from here, book a room, go on a pub crawl of sorts. I didn't want to."

He's frowning now, and through the sluggish movement of his mind, Dream wonders if kissing him again would make him stop that.

"One of the newer guys in the group," George's jaw clenched firmly, "He stayed back too. Said we should just have a few day drinks, go explore the woods out the back of the property. *These woods. My woods.*"

He trails off for a moment, and stares out into the foliage, like something's caught his attention, distracted him from his story, and his skin flushes that delicious, enticing shade of pink once more.

“He was,” he fidgets, “*Interesting*. So I said yes.”

Dream absently reminds himself that it’s stupid to be jealous of somebody that not only you’ve never met, but somebody who is clearly years in the past.

It’s stupid, yes. But he still doesn’t like not being the reason for George’s pink cheeks, the delectable flush of humiliation, or lust.

He tangles his fingers with George’s, looping them together like the roots of a mangrove tree.

The shy glance he receives makes it worthwhile.

He wants to know how far down his chest that flush goes.

George continues.

“There was... a sort of decorative display, in the cabin,” he chews his lip as he thinks, “and it had the knife, as like an art piece.”

Dream knows what he’s talking about, he realises with a start. There’s an empty, metal display on the fireplace mantle, it’s contents long missing.

He can’t help but shudder.

“He said it was a ‘bolo knife’, and I thought it was so *stupid*,” George rolls his eyes, scoffs, “We were on the *trail*, there was no need to bring it, no branches to cut up or whatever. And he kept teasing me,” George’s lip curls, “About how I *jumped* at every noise, every sound, every *bloody frog call*.”

His anger dissipates suddenly, and his eyes soften as he fidgets with a flower in his hands. The melancholy in his voice returns.

“I should have known better,” he whispers, so low that Dream strains to hear him through the thickness of the air, “I wanted to impress him, *prove I wasn’t scared*, but I— I should have known *better*.”

The flower is shredded in his shaking, anxious hands, and Dream longs to comfort him, but he’s so terrified of this dangerous, beautiful boy, and he doesn’t know what to do.

So he listens.

He listens as George crumbles, and tells him about how he found the old, shedded skin of a python,

and how he thought it would be *funny, really he did*, when he held one end in his hand, and tossed the other end over the boy's shoulder, trying to make him see that he *wasn't scared of this deep, dark forest*.

"I guess he was secretly more scared than I was, because he panicked, and he spun around with that knife and—"

George cuts himself off with a laugh, but it's a watery sound as he thumbs the purple scarring that mars his delicate, shimmering skin, the thick line that aggressively runs along the front of his neck, just above his collarbone, which matches the violet shade of the clustering wildflowers, nearby in the clearing where they had once danced.

Dream can't help his fumbling curiosity.

"If it was an accident, then why—"

He's cut off by a sharp, *vicious* glance, and he wishes he had remained silent when he greets those brown eyes just as they shift into a serpentine appearance, fear gripping him just as hard as George is currently, his hand crushing his own, bruising and rough as George *spits, hisses, cries—*

"It *was* an accident, he *froze* when he *realised*, not even an *inch* in my *neck*," George's words are low, growling and petrifying, "No arteries, no windpipe, *nothing*, just a cut, and he *froze*, but he took one look at the blood and he *panicked—*"

Dream thinks he might be panicking now as George manoeuvres in front of him, hand still crushed in his grip, held between their chests as he leans in—

"He *panicked*, and instead of *helping*, he wanted to *save himself*, so he fucking *pushed—*"

George's grip grows stronger, more painful, Dream feels the joints of his knuckles shift uncomfortably under the strain as he winces as George leans in closer, closer, hands still clasped between them in a hold to match that of his mentioned python, and his growled words are dissolving into a garbled mess as George's jaw *shifts* to make room for *sharp teeth, pointed fangs*, as he *hisses—*

"He *pushed*, and he cut *everything—*"

The calls of the animals have grown louder and now, they're *blasting, echoing, deafening*, as they call out in *fear, in warning*, as shadows of *things, of large animals that **don't belong here*** shift behind George.

An *orangutan*, of all things, it's dusky orange fur contrasting with the emerald green of the forest, has materialised in one of the trees, and stares down at them with a saddened gaze.

Dream thinks he must be hallucinating, he's so certain he must be, but he remembers the sharp claws of the mountain lion, remembers George's coy words—

"They're real to the mind."

He's not hallucinating. This is all *George*.

He panics, finally manages to choke out words, a strangled, frightened cry of—

"George—"

George blinks.

Glances over his shoulder.

Glances down at their clasped hands, crushed between their chests.

He yanks his hand away like it's burned him, and Dream feels the blood flow return to his fingers and he slumps against the tree in a flood of relief, as George blinks back tears, his jaw shifting back as the fangs dissolve, returning to his human form, serpentine eyes becoming a soft, mottled brown.

The animals frightened, desperate warning calls are silenced. The shadows melt back into nothing.

The orangutan was never there to begin with.

"I'm so sorry," George gasps, hands grabbing at his hair and *pulling*, as he slumps back to a seated position, some distance between them both as he says, "I lost control, they weren't real, I'm so *sorry*."

Dream thinks of the strange solidity of the shadows that were forming.

Thinks of the orangutan.

Thinks of the sharp, burning claw marks in his chest, stinging with sweat and exertion, *and*

something else—

“They’re real enough,” he murmurs.

George shuffles further away. Dream resists the urge to follow him, tries to focus on the aching bones in his hand, on the heat of his wounds.

He fails, and he pushes through the syrup of the air to press against his side, comforting the both of them.

He relishes in the electrical, magic hum of George’s skin against his own, and feels his subconscious *preen* when after some hesitation, George gives in, and leans against Dream’s shoulder, careful, cautious and gentle.

“You’re so *precious*,” he murmurs, and Dream shivers at the sugar lacing his words.

George swallows, before he continues, carefully.

“It *was* an accident. To begin with. I would have lived,” he glances up at the flowers above them, “I had so much to live for.”

There’s a beat of silence, with only the sound of a bird’s beating wings somewhere in the distance, before he continues.

“The forest made me a deal. It would help me live,” he chews his lip carefully, “*Help me get my revenge*. Part of it’s spirit would reside in me, and it would stay until I wanted it gone. All I had to do was—” he hesitates, glancing at Dream nervously, “Was give it my *name*.”

“*Will you tell me your original name?*”

“...What’s so important about names?”

“Names have *power*,” George admits, weakly, “By giving somebody your name, you let them have *influence* over you. Otherwise, their influence would sort of just... *wear off*. Like, how after we danced, you likely had *residual* spirit left in you. You would have *seen things*, even *appeared* differently, like how *I* see things, or how *I* look. I had to give up my name, in order for that to stay.”

“What would you have done with *my* name?” Dream queries, and his eyebrows raise in shock as George *flushes—*

“Nothing *bad*,” George insists, but he looks away, pink flush still dappled across his moonlight skin, and refuses to look back at Dream when he speaks.

“So, I gave it my name. And that gave it the power to reside in me, *inside my head, my heart*,” he rests a hand on his chest as he speaks, an almost fond tone to his voice, “And the forest wrapped my wounds in the snake skin that had caused them, *cradled me* in it like a *child* as it *forced* me to

breathe through the hole in my neck, helped me *breathe* through the blood in my lungs, until, *finally*, I *healed*.”

He traces the scar once more.

“I healed, and I cared for the spirits in the forest, the ones you saw when we danced, and then, I—” he smiles, “I got my *payback*.”

His smile turns down at the corners.

“But, by the time I got my payback, it had been *so long*, and I had no reason to want to leave anymore,” his tone saddens once more, and Dream leans against him in comfort, “Nobody ever looked for me, although my family *adored me*. So I figure, whatever lies he told, they must have been good ones.”

He sighs.

“So, I let the spirit in me stay,” he scratches the dirt as he speaks, “And over time, I’ve become more *it*, and less *me*. I had no reason to want to be human. No reason to want them gone. But *you*,” he laughs, shy, “You make me want to be human now, and it’s pushing the other half out, and *they don’t like it*.”

He pauses, finally looking at Dream once more.

“I’m not sure what’ll happen if I decide to force them out.”

Dream breaks at the notes of childlike fear in his tone.

He reaches out, and spreads his aching hand over the centre of George’s chest.

Underneath his spirited, moonlight skin, a human heart beats, thundering with the sound of the forest’s drums.

George places a hand over his, and Dream looks up, looks into his gaze as George shyly asks—

“Do you want to dance again? It’ll be easier, this time, I *promise*.”

The drums echo, as he takes George’s hand.

Chapter End Notes

THIS
WAS
SO
HARD
TO WRITE AAAAAAAAAAAAAA

i ended up viewing the lyrics as like, the forest speaking to human George, and then the last verse and chorus and being fae George talking to Dream, and the outro seen as either way!!

I really hope you guys liked this!! I look forward to your comments as always!! I adore you!

intruxx

Chapter Summary

gone inside of the wild zabajaba

all the mad and the sad gonna have atcha

sour plants hungry fangs, jabazaba

tangles mass in the vast zabajaba

Chapter Notes

intruxx is track 6, and it's almost like a funky little interlude before we get back into the mess of things!!

it's a wonderful track, gentle and interesting in the beginning, but picks up pace around the halfway mark before it fades out again, and i tried to convey that in the flow of this chapter.

give it a listen!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream spins.

The forest melts.

The bark of an oak tree peels, crawling and sliding down it's trunk, before creeping back up again. It's ashy grey tone pulses and shifts, slipping into warmer, darker shades, as it resumes it's false peel.

The grass at his feet repeats it's textures, mirrored repeatedly, almost symmetrically across the ground that Dream dances upon, rising up to meet his steps as it breathes.

As Dream is spun once more from George's hands, he stumbles on the twirl, as he gazes into the eyes of animals that don't belong here, eyes of baboons and clouded leopards as they laze in the shadows and watch.

He stumbles, he trips, and he falls to his knees in the dirt and the grass, laughing the whole way.

Yes, this dance is definitely easier, more gentle, more fluid.

He flops onto his back, next to his bag and his camera, wheezes another laugh that is echoed by the hooting of the baboon, and George laughs with him.

“You’re so *pretty*,” George grins from where he stands, nowhere near as dizzy or as uncoordinated as Dream, inhuman and poised.

“I’m not as pretty as you,” Dream insists twisting to reach to his pack for the camera, the motion tugging at his wounds and pulling at the adhesive of his bandages, “Nowhere near.”

The pain is distant and numb, like it belongs to somebody else, and he completes the motion, the camera shutter clicking as he aims the lens down at George.

He thinks he could photograph George all day, with his milky skin and his pearly white teeth, contrasting so deliciously with the rosy flush of his cheeks, the soft pink of his mouth, of the tongue that he sticks out in protest.

It’s a very human gesture.

Dream attempts to tell him so and—

He slaps a hand over his mouth, eyes wide with shock and confusion as George *giggles*.

What just came out of his mouth?

He tries to speak again, and the garbled gibberish returns, a mess of twisted syllables and sounds, nothing that fits the shapes of his mouth, and he slaps a hand over his mouth again.

“You’re speaking normally, you know,” George laughs, and his teeth are straight and human, “You just think you aren’t. It’s a side effect of the residual energy. Your speech will come back soon.”

Is it like the hallucinations he had? Like how his eyes changed in the mirror?

He queries this, in his nonsensical tongue, and George nods.

As he returns his camera to his pack, and lies down on the forest floor, watching a beetle scurry from under a leaf, Dream tells him that he could stay like this forever.

“You could,” George states, as he stares up at the glowing sun, it’s beams causing colourful flares of light, orbs of diffracted shades of red and green peering down at them.

Dream shakes his head. He couldn’t leave Sapnap. He mentions this, and George tilts his head in confusion.

He informs George that Sapnap is his best friend. *An excellent writer, and good to work with.*

A good nurse, too, he adds, tapping at his bandages, making George laugh.

So yeah, he could never leave Sapnap. *And besides*, he explains, his words tossing and turning in his mouthing, more confusion and tangles than the mangroves of the river, *this forest scares the shit out of him now.*

“The forest scares you,” George scoffs, “But I don’t?”

Dream shrugs his shoulders, grins, attempts to say ‘only sometimes’, and George gives a low chuckle.

“What if I said I wanted to *keep* you? Would that scare you then?”

Dream tilts his head from where he lays, stares at George instead of the canopy above them, and thinks.

His words slowly come back, and this time when he speaks, only half comes out upside-down and wrong.

I think I’d— “—let you,” he hears himself, finally, his voice partially skipping over syllables like a broken record, “It’d be hypocritical of me—“ *—not to.*

He loses grasp on his language once again, words dissolving into a slippery cacophony of noise and babble. It doesn’t phase him this time. He knows George can understand him.

There’s the beginning of a flush rising on that milky, moonlight skin of his, and Dream wonders just how rose-red he can make this otherworldly being flush, how human he can force him to be with just his words alone.

Not being able to understand his own speech, it makes him *brave*. He knows what he’s saying, sure, can feel his mouth make the corresponding shapes, feel his tongue pressed to the roof of his mouth intermittently, feel the airflow of his words.

But when it all sounds complex, and nonsensical, Dream doesn’t have to hear himself say it.

So he tells George everything.

About how he'd like to keep him, all to himself, keep him safe and tucked away and loved, so loved. He reaches over to the boy sitting next to him, and runs his fingers up and down his forearm, relishing in the tingle of energy it emanates, in the sensation of George's skin against his own.

He tells him about how his spirit side is dangerous, but ethereal, chaotic and otherworldly, so intriguing and gorgeous. But, he pulls himself upright to sit, to reach out with both hands, to touch with both hands, to caress with both hands, *his human side, it's soft. He's so beautiful, he's so perfect.*

"My wild boy," he finishes, and his words ring clear in his own ears, no nonsense or false syllables.

George's flush has flipped from a soft pink to a muted shade of red, *dark and aggressive* against his delicate, silvery skin, and it runs along his cheekbones, down his neck and over the tips of his ears.

George, who has powers Dream can only *imagine*, is rendered almost entirely *speechless*, as he squirms under Dream's touch, looks away, off to the side at the shadowy figures of animals who peek at them from the undergrowth, at the whistling insects and the warbling amphibians hiding in the damp leaf litter.

"I'll show *you* wild," he mumbles, no heat to his words, "I think I liked it more when you were *scared* of me."

"I still *am* scared of you," Dream whispers, a soft admission of the truth, cautiously reaching up to turn George's face back toward him, to take in that pretty flush and his nervously bitten lips, his oh-so human appearance, "But I'm scared for *different* reasons now."

The air is sugary again, melted caramel and thick syrup making up the atmosphere, and he leans forward, pushes through the resistance of the power lingering in the air, and he presses his mouth against George's with care.

The sweet, earthy taste of George's mouth drags him in deeper, makes him *hunger* for it as he licks at his bottom lip, asking politely for it, begging for it as his breath begins to come in harsh exhales, and George parts his lips for him so nicely, and Dream relishes in the slide of his tongue against his own, drinks him in with a fever as he slides the hand that cups George's jaw, down to the collar of his holed t-shirt, grips gently at his neck.

The lights behind his closed eyelids flicker, vibrant shades of red, green and blue, forming rivers of colour. With his eyes closed, it's almost like he can still *see*, faintly making out the energy of George's soul, the vivid colours of it a pulsing haze. He can see eyes, thousands of eyes, blinking at him, hungry mouths opening and closing, teeth gnashing together as he nips at George's mouth, before angles his head down to nip at the soft skin of his neck.

The ground beneath them disappears, the sounds of the forest far-off, elsewhere, and in this moment, all Dream knows is *George*.

George's breathy moans explode into fireworks beneath his eyes, and each sharp breath he takes makes the visuals brighten, intensify, like they *feed* off the pleasure Dream is giving him.

He is faintly aware of the flickering of light, of the incorrect passage of time, influenced and distorted by the chaos of the forest's energy in concentrated use, aware of the sun rising and falling, giving way to the moon in mere minutes.

As he opens his eyes to lick at the marks on George's neck, kiss at the light bruising and the indentations of his teeth, he absentmindedly wonders how long he's been here this time.

They fall back to the earth together, and Dream buries his face in the crook of George's neck, inhaling his earthy, syrup scent.

"I want you to leave here with me," he murmurs, "I want to show you the whole world, *the real world*."

"But," George hesitates, "What if I wanted you to stay *here*?"

"You know I can't," Dream whispers, and he doesn't want to think about the pain that statement causes, not far off like his physical pain, this one far too close and centred in his chest, "I'd never be able to willingly give this place my name. It scares me far too much."

There's a beat. He feels George shift, kiss the side of his head, and bury his face in his hair a moment, feels the dampness of *something*—

"I know," he hears him whisper.

And then he's gone.

Dream is left sitting in the clearing, as the forest melts around him, alone.

The afternoon sun beams down on him, warmth shining onto his shoulders.

But, he thinks as he picks up his gear, stumbles through the syrupy air towards the trail, *he doesn't feel warm at all*.

He feels like he might never be warm again.

Chapter End Notes

sorry this one took a couple of days!! i had it all planned out, but i needed a lil breather. writing the new year fic helped a lot though, as it was a welcome change of pace!! it felt better coming back this after, and i'm feeling quite confident in how i want this all to end now!!

as always, i'm genofeve over on tumblr, and i simply adore every last one of you!!

i look forward to responding to your comments!!

<3

hazey

Chapter Summary

no no you're so juiced
you said you'd kick the booze
you know i'll get bruised
you know i'm just a boy

Chapter Notes

hi!! hazey is our SEVENTH track holy cow, we're past half way now!
hazey has this sort of loose, light lilt to it, despite the harsh story that the lyrics tell,
before it reaches a crescendo, and then falls into an eerie, unsettling, panicked silence.
the lyrics are rather solemn, and sad, and it's another amazing track from this album.

sapnap returns as best bro and pro field doctor (in a pinch) once again

ps; there's some incredibly incorrect first aid in this chapter, as well as wound n snake
mentions!!!

please enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"I know."

George's solemn words ring through the woods. Even long after he's gone, Dream can hear him, echoing off the tree's, bouncing off the dirt and grass, reflecting off the canopy of leaves above him.

He keeps his head down, keeps his eyes focused on what he can see through the lens of his camera, photographing each individual insect, each stray paw print, each scattered indication of any animal of some kind, the perfect distraction from his ringing melancholy, *from his unending guilt*.

The camera hangs heavily from it's leather strap, precariously bouncing against his chest from it's place around his neck.

Dream hasn't done anything wrong, and yet, he feels like a criminal.

The sun remains constant. He's travelled far enough from the origin point of George's energy, and time is no longer distorted, passing normally once more, returning to the point it was at prior, prior

to the dance he and his wild boy shared.

Late afternoon, however many days in the past.

He's not sure.

Dream walks. Keeps his eyes on the ground, and ignores the way the patterns of the grass and roots beneath his feet seem to repeat, over, *and over again*, almost an infinite cycle of symmetrical fractals of nature.

He sips a spare water bottle from his pack, and tucks it under his elbow.

Just keep moving.

He *knows* he's moving, knows it's another illusion, he's looked up a thousand times to check, figured out on the one thousand and first, and now, he keeps his head down.

He tells himself it's the constant repetition, or the way the roots seem to crawl underneath him, like writhing tendrils of something bigger, something *alive*, that's making him nauseous, and not the lack of George.

Despite the minimal grasp on logic he manages to barely maintain, the residual energy still makes him dizzy, confused and lost. He finds himself forgetting turns he's taken, forgetting whole sections of the path after he completes them, his mind too far away to remember accurately.

It wouldn't be an issue, not really.

Except, for when he's almost home.

So close, *so, so close*, he's past the treeline, in the grassy hills between the cabin and the woods.

And he sees it.

Nestled amongst the grass and stray branches, swirled into a tight spiral, is a snake.

It suns its tawny scales, tests the air with a swift movement of its forked tongue, and Dream wonders if it can taste the sugar in the air.

As he kneels to photograph the creature, it occurs to him that this is a snake he knows, the muted brown colouring, and the spade shape of it's head so awfully similar, and he thinks perhaps he's even photographed it before.

But the name escapes him, his thoughts too slippery, too wet with the melted sugar coating of George, *George*, **George**—

He kneels down, the water bottle adjusted, jammed under his armpit, fiddles with the lens of his camera, with his photo settings.

The shutter clicks, and he focuses on a few close-ups of the snake's distinctive scale pattern, and of it's elliptical shaped eyes, images that he *knows* Sapnap will *hate*, but will *love* for an article.

The snake's tongue flickers once more, and it exhales a slow, angry hiss, flattening itself out in a familiar, reptilian show of a response to provocation.

Dream knows when it's time to leave.

But, as he stands up, the water bottle under his armpit *slips*.

It *hits* the dirt.

It *bounces*.

And, understandably, it *pisses off* the already unsettled snake.

It's not that later, although how much not that later, he's unsure, when Dream accidentally swings the front door open *way* too fucking hard.

It collides with the wall, denting it, and Dream winces, because *wow, that's probably gonna come out of his and Sapnap's next pay*.

He winces again when he hears a startled yelp from the study.

Sapnap.

He emerges from the room in a shock, laptop brandished in hands like a weapon, a combination expression of both fear and aggression painted across his face, his aggression only slightly outweighing his fear.

“Oops,” Dream says, his grin loose and sideways, as he discards his pack and camera to a spare couch cushion, before flopping next to them himself.

The aggression slips from Sapnap’s face, leaving only confusion as he takes in the sight of Dream on the couch.

Sapnap blinks at him as he lowers his laptop.

“Oh my *god*,” he says, placing the laptop on the coffee table at last, a sense of urgency in his steps as he rounds it and approaches Dream, “*Dude*, did you fall? What happened? You’ve busted your stitches, man, *shit*.”

Dream glances down.

Oh. He’s right.

The adhesive on the little strips holding his wounds together has disconnected, and in his tumble, it seems like he’s re-opened what was the beginning of scabs. They’ve bled through the old bandages that covered them, and there are a few spots staining the muted green button-up he sports, dark and damp.

He’s also faintly aware of a painful sensation, something intense and burning, but it’s far away, distant, and to him currently, the burning is nothing more than the warmth of a campfire, embers heating the air.

He can’t place where it’s coming from. He figures it’s probably not important.

Sapnap’s hands are fluttering, like he doesn’t know where to begin, like he’s taking inventory of each scrape and bruise, each scratch of branches, each ruined bandage.

“I told you,” he hisses, as he moves forward, finally, deciding to work on the damage done to Dream’s chest first, unbuttoning it angrily, “I *told* you, I wasn’t gonna *fucking do this again*—“

The first-aid kit still resides on the coffee table from it's last use, and as Sapnap reaches for it, he glances back at Dream, at the loose, easy smile he wears despite his physical state of distress, at the beads of sweat pooling on his forehead, and he pauses.

Dream tries to school the hazey expression he wears. But suppressing it just makes him *laugh*.

Sapnap's face is lined with colours, outlines of red, green and blue mapping the contours of his face, and they trace the shocked way that his jaw drops in realisation, the exasperated way that he snarls.

"Dream, you *idiot*," he shouts, removing an adhesive bandage from Dream's skin with a little more force than necessary, "You went and saw him *again*? Don't you *remember* what happened last time? You said you wouldn't—"

"*Actually*," Dream interrupts, still lazy and stupid, "I never said that."

He thinks Sapnap might actually hit him. Smack him over the head with the bottle of antiseptic he's got in his hand. He grins, but it's soft and slow, as thinks back on the dance, of the passing of days and nights, *of the taste of earth*.

"Besides," he continues, "It was better this time."

Sapnap's not an idiot.

"Oh my *god*," he grouches through clenched teeth, as he presses an antiseptic soaked cotton ball against the re-opened claw marks lining Dream's chest, "You *kissed him*, didn't you?"

"You *can't* be mad at me, Sap," Dream argues lightly, drifting back and forth from the stinging reality of pain, to the sugar-soaked distant air of the residual energy, "I got you your otters."

"They wanna be some real good shots, man," Sapnap purses his lips, and Dream can see he's trying not to smile at his idiocy, "Some people would pay good money to have me play nurse for 'em, you know?"

Dream laughs at that, and Sapnap smacks shoulder, tells him to stay still.

The sting of antiseptic is familiar, but still distant, far-off like the white hot burning that he still can't quite place.

There's another pain, too.

"My chest aches," he sighs, and Sapnap snorts.

"Yeah, no shit."

“Mm, not like that.”

Sapnap stills in cleaning the dirt from Dream’s wounds, tilts his head back to look at the ceiling, in a perfect physical display of ‘*are you fucking kidding me right now?*’

He sighs, resumes his nurse duties, beginning to re-bandage all the cuts and scrapes.

“Dream, *please* don’t tell me that you’re in *love* with the little psycho—“

“He’s not,” Dream protests, the ache in his chest lonesome and sorrowful, “He’s just— He’s *lonely, and he’s sad.*”

He sighs, drunk and melancholic.

“But, I can’t stay here with him, can I?”

“No,” Sapnap laughs in disbelief, shakes his head, “No, you cannot, because it will *kill you.*”

He snags Dream’s loose camera, powers it up, aims it, takes a shot of him.

The flash is jarring, *sobering*.

“Look at yourself.”

On the display, the bandages are a stark white against his tanned skin, and there are still numerous scrapes that litter his body sporadically. The bruises are uncountable, and Dream’s eyes are glazed, hazy and distant.

He’s a mess. Even he can see that.

Sapnap sighs, pulls the camera back toward himself, and begins flicking through previously taken photos on display.

“I better not find a porno in here, Dream, or I swear to *god*—“

He pauses, squints at the display, shakes his head as he lets out a short exhale of surprise.

“*Jesus,*” he exclaims in a hushed whisper, “Dream, do you *know* how long you were apparently *gone for?* This has photos dated a *week* from now you *moron.*”

He’s shaking his head, cursing under his breath, as Dream thinks of the distorted time, the passage of the sun and the moon overhead as he and George had sat in the clearing together.

A week seems right.

Sapnap pauses again, and then he *swears*.

“Fucking *hell*, dude,” he shakes his head, tugs the display closer to his face by about an inch, examining in shock, concern paving the way for his words, “Is that a *cottonmouth*? It looks *pissed*.”

Cottonmouth?

Oh.

Oh god.

The name of the snake, the name he couldn’t quite recall. He jolts him, *hard*, and it *sobers him*, the dizzy confusion and the syrupy euphoria leaking away in a rush, chased away by *fear*, as he *remembers*—

“Oh *god*,” the burning pain that was once so far off is now disturbingly close, and Dream can feel himself beginning to panic, beginning to hyperventilate as he locates it now, settled in his left leg, in his calf, just above where his hiking boots end, “Sapnap, my *leg*—“

“What—“

Dream struggles to sit up, to pull his leg up off the floor, as the residual magic ebbs away in his bloodstream, replaced by *venom*, venom that makes his limbs heavy and useless as he paws at his worn-out jeans.

Sapnap stretches out Dream’s leg, rests his foot on the coffee table, beside the laptop and the first-aid kit, and together, they find it.

There’s a small tear in the old denim, in an unfortunately threadbare area. Dream can feel his arms going limp as he tries to paw at it, turning into useless lumps of muscle, of flesh and bone, and Sapnap urgently pushes his hands away, rolling up the leg of his jeans as Dream begins to feel *sick*.

There’s blood. There’s *a lot of blood*.

It drools from a puncture wound in his leg, unable to clot, unable to congeal, surrounded by a nasty cloud of purple, tinged with an uglier, aggressive shade of black.

His leg is beginning to swell, inflating like a balloon.

He's completely hyperventilating now, breath coming in short, panicked pants and he's not sure if it's the anxiety, or the result of the venom that crawls through his veins.

"Oh fuck," Sapnap is panicking, "Oh fuck, oh *fuck!* Dream, that photo was taken an *over an hour* ago, how do just fucking *forget* that you've been bitten by a fucking *viper, dude?! How are you not screaming?*"

"George," Dream says simply, weakly, tight and wheezing through his panic, an explanation.

George's lingering energy had staved off the pain. It'd likely staved off the symptoms as well, slowed the progression of the venom.

He didn't even know he'd been bit.

Sapnap sounds far off as he rifles through the first-aid kit, checking each item like he isn't quite sure what he's looking for.

He isn't, Dream realises distantly, *oh no*.

"Fuck, *fuck*," Sapnap hisses as his hands settle on a roll of fabric bandage, "Do you *tourniquet* for snakebites or not? *Fuck*, I can't *remember!*"

He glances over at Dream, and Dream thinks he must look like absolute *shit*, because he can see Sapnap's eyes widen as he makes a snap decision.

"Okay, *okay, fuck*, I'm gonna— I'm doing a *tourniquet*, okay? Just— just, *fuck*, stay with me? *Okay?*"

Dream doesn't respond. Doesn't think it'd be wise to waste the energy, as he listens to the way his heartbeat stumbles and falters, beating out of sync, *out of time*, as it races and stutters.

There's an unbelievable, strong source of pressure, *painful*, as Sapnap winds the bandage just below Dream's knee, above the bite mark on his calf, tight enough to bruise, and, finally, Dream caves, and he *yelps*.

He can feel tears forming as the cry rips from his throat and Sapnap apologises again, *and again*, as he bandages, and bandages, *and bandages*—

“I’m so sorry, Dream, I’m *so* sorry, I don’t know what to *do*,” he sounds as though he’s on the verge of crying himself, “I can’t call emergency, we have no phone service here, and we’re so *far* from the nearest hospital, Dream, *I’m so sorry*—“

“*George*,” Dream tries, and it chokes out in a strangled sob.

“*George?* What—“

It clicks.

“Oh god, yes— Okay, *yes, okay*, maybe he can help, alright, *fuck*—“ Sapnap stands, tugging Dream up with him as he cries out in pain, “You *need* to *stand*, Dream, I’m so sorry, but you need to— Come *on*.”

Sapnap is encouraging and apologetic all at once as he loops Dream’s arm around his shoulders, supporting him towards the door in broken, shaky steps and sobs, Dream sobbing for the burning in his leg, for the fear he feels, for the nausea settling in hard and brutal, for stress he’s placed upon his closest friend.

His leg is on *fire*.

They leave the door open, and they stumble toward the treeline together, hastily, and yet still too slow, and Sapnap whispers hushed promises, hushing his panicked, pained cries.

“I’m gonna take you to your weird ass boyfriend, and it’s gonna be fine—“

Dream thinks Sapnap might be comforting himself, more than he is Dream.

“*It’s gonna be fine.*”

Chapter End Notes

boy that’s not good lmao

i hope you guys enjoyed this chapter!!! aaaas always, i’m genofeve over on tumblr, and you!!! have been beautiful <3

ps: special thank u to the current followers of my tumblr who witnessed my
“jägerbomb arc” last night uh oh HAHA

toes

Chapter Summary

and all i ever want
is just a little love
i said in purrs under the palms
and all i ever want is breaking me apart
i said to the thing that i once was

Chapter Notes

woops this took me a while HAHA SORRY

toes is track number eight!! the lyrics talk about a creature who is a man, although he is twisted, foolish and unusual, and i think that describes our boy George here perfectly, don't you?

i really hope you guys enjoy this!!!! we're so close to being done <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It takes them years to reach the treeline.

Dream knows it's not that far to walk. The cabin resides so close to it. But the pain is unending, leaving him burning and hot, sweat pooling on his skin as he clings to his best friend desperately.

Sapnap never stops speaking to him.

He's a constant stream of encouragement, and apologies, and Dream just hopes that if he does die, he can find a way to tell him to *shut up*.

It's not his fault.

None of this is.

Dream's head spins, a dizzy tango of nauseating, swirling colours, and he continues to stumble.

He thinks his brain might be dissolving, turning to a useless lump of *mush* between his ears.

It takes them years to reach the treeline. But eventually, they do.

They stumble into the thick of branches, tripping on tree roots and each other, step into the myriad of vibrant green foliage, into the living kaleidoscope of colour, and life.

Sapnap is swearing next to him.

Dream has to struggle to make out what he's saying. His head feels like it's underwater.

He wonders if his brain has melted yet.

“Fuck, *fuck*—“ Sapnap stumbles again, tugging Dream further into the overgrown woods, “*How are we supposed to find—*“

There's a *flicker*.

Sapnap freezes.

A familiar knife is pointed at him, the tip of the metal blade pointed between his eyes, and he peers at it in shock, at the moonlight hands that holds it.

He holds one hand up in a surrender, and he hisses—

“Jesus, *fuck*, Dream, what kind of a type do you *have*?“

In other circumstances, Dream probably would have laughed.

But right now, nobody's laughing.

George's dark eyes are sporting elliptical pupils, and Dream can see the way his jaw sits, awkward, to make room for the dangerous set of teeth he sports.

His breathing is coming in low, heavy pants, almost *growling*.

“What have you *done*.”

“What have *I* done-? Are you *kidding* me?” It’s probably not a good idea to yell at George right now, not when he looks like this, not when he has a tighter grip on that knife than he does on his self-control, but Sapnap’s always been stubborn, “*Fuck you*, man! I had to drag him out here because this *idiot* got drunk on *you*, and then decided to piss off a *snake*.”

Dream absently wonders if Sapnap is trying to get himself *killed*.

George bristles, adjusting his grip on the knife, but something seems to come over him, an odd sensation of calm.

“A snake?”

Dream wonders if he’s thinking of the parallels between them. If they’ll *both* be doomed to this forest, how *both* their fates involve snakes.

He knows he is.

It’s almost suspicious, in a way.

In fact.

It’s very suspicious.

The thought lingers in his gooey brain.

The knife has vanished, god knows where it’s gone, discarded to the forest floor, and George is gesturing wildly.

“Lay him down, quick,” his words are stern, commanding, “*Quick*, while I can still help.”

Dream can feel himself slipping, as he’s laid down upon the leaf litter. It’s getting harder and harder to stay conscious, and his breathing is laboured, struggling and *wheezing*.

A beetle scuttles over the skin of his wrist. It pauses and seems to stare at him. Dream stares back.

The shimmer of George’s own skin seems so much brighter in his feverish haze, and Dream’s tongue feels swollen, like a useless lump of meat, resting in his mouth.

A baboon *hoots* nearby, nervous as it watches on from its hiding place, and he hears the leaves crumble under the paws of something lurking further in the shadows.

“*Jesus,*” Sapnap whispers, “How is this *possible*? They don’t *belong* here, they don’t—“

He cuts himself off, words dying in his mouth as he spots the familiar mountain lion, lazing in the low bough of an oak tree. He stares at the animals that gather, *gather to watch Dream dying on his back in the woods.*

“This isn’t *real.*”

Dream can see the familiar fawn, hiding deep in the shrubbery. He can barely make out the white spots that he knows litter her tawny fur. Her eyes are sad, and gentle. She flicks her ear toward him, watching.

“*Real to the mind,*” Dream croaks out.

Dream just hopes they haven’t come to eat him.

Spots are beginning to cloud his vision. The pain carries on, and he catches brief snippets of hushed, hurried conversation.

“— *shouldn’t have done a tourniquet—*“

“*Fuck, I couldn’t remember—*“

“*When I take it off, it’s going to—*“

Dream slips, misses, loses hold on the conversation.

He aims a glance at George, seeking comfort in his presence, but when he finds him cutting off the leg of his jeans, the sharp shimmer of the knife *gliding* through worn denim with ease, he looks away again, squeezes his eyes shut.

He gets the feeling that, whatever follows, is about to *hurt*.

There’s a cool hand placed on his ankle, just below the bite. Slender fingers wrap the joint, humming and electric, and he can tell they belong to George.

Something thick, a goopy kind of paste is slathered over the bite and he *howls*.

It *stings*.

But that's nothing.

The tourniquet is removed, the release of all that pressure like a *snap*, and the burning, *the pain, the venom*, it *rushes*, it *intensifies*, it *spreads*, no longer slowed by the presence of bandages.

All that venom, *building up in one place*, eating away at the veins inside his leg, it now *surges* forward, propelled by his rapid heart rate, and he *writhes*—

His shoulders are held in place by another set of hands, *Sapnap's*, who continues to spout his nonsense apologies, while George hushes him faintly, his words sounding unfamiliar, lost and confusing in the chaos.

His vision scrambles, and he frantically looks for the fawn, for her soft comforting eyes.

As he searches for her, he's aware of the trees melting around them. The differing shades of green all swirling into one, dripping from the canopy that hangs above them, a ceiling of oozing leaves. He can hear frogs, chorusing and panicked, chortling out croaks of *advice, of insistence*.

The forest is dim, and they are left bathed in the glow of the moon.

The afternoon sun that wore on them minutes ago is nowhere to be seen.

He can feel George's energy, hanging thick in the air like a humid fog, the sickly, sweet sensation of warm honey layered over him like a blanket.

But this time, it does nothing to ease the pain.

He slips in and out of consciousness, picking up on pieces of conversation as George works over him, hearing glimpses of discussion as he plays hopscotch with the line of awake, and not.

“—*even are you?*”

“—*human.*”

“—*not.*”

“—*am, just twisted—*”

He fades. He returns.

The moon sinks, and the sun rises once more. The thin grass peaks through the leaf litter mattress he lies upon, tickling at his skin.

The pain returns with a *vengeance*. He slips once more, fading into lost conversation.

“—*want with him?*”

“—*love him. It’s killing me.*”

“—*him too.*”

He is tugged back into the living world with a force, yanked back into consciousness with a yell, *a scream*, and the creatures echo back with their own, their yells of concern, and of some kind of *warning*, mirroring his own, his of fear and pain.

He wishes he could think. Just enough to hear what they were trying so hard to warn him about.

“—*might not work. He’s very far gone.*”

“—*my fault. Shouldn’t have tied the—*”

“—*don’t blame yourself yet.*”

Dream is faintly aware that he might be dying.

He doesn’t want to die.

Another garbled cry of pain escapes his lips.

“—*can’t just let him die.*”

“—*one thing we could do.*”

Wait.

No.

Oh god, no.

The suspicion of the snake returns.

The warning cries of the animals grow louder.

No, please, no.

Dream knows why he couldn't place the snake now. He knows why it confused him.

Cottonmouth's aren't grass snakes. They're semi-aquatic. They live next to water.

The snake didn't belong there.

Oh god.

He can feel Sapnap's hands, carding through his filthy hair, working out the knots built up by sweat and dirt, as George asks him for his name.

Sapnap is quiet. When Dream blinks, he can faintly see him staring down at him, the lines of his face contorted and glowing false colours, altered by the energy of the forest. He looks uncertain.

"You need to make a decision, *now*."

George is panicking.

He's losing control, Dream realises faintly, when he hears Sapnap's frightened gasp, feels his hands tighten in his hair, hears the creatures panic, hooves and paws scattering the twigs and leaves beneath them as they kick up dirt, running, scrambling to hide in the undergrowth.

He's fading again.

The melted greens and browns of the forest that slide against one another, blend into a thick, black tendril of shadow. The darkness reaches out for him, leaving him cold and shaking.

He thinks he might close his eyes.

Just for a few moments.

Chapter End Notes

double uh oh

as always, I'm genofeve on tumblr, and I adore you all and can't wait to read your comments!!

we're getting so close to the end!!!! oh no!!! no seriously oh no i have no idea what I'm gonna do when this is done

maybe I'll finally write that sequel to lightning huh?

who knows!!

love you <3

wyrd

Chapter Summary

so my friend our time is done
you and i could've had so much
with ropes for the bucket
of luscious black gold nuggets, yeah

(don't go)

Chapter Notes

boy this one sure is late to the party

my bad I've been off writing uhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh
bad things HAHA oopsy

our 3rd last chapter omg i cry

the theory of the song *wyrd*, is that it's actually sung from the point of view of Fate (with a capital F). fate isn't to be messed with, and by trying to change your own fate, or in this case, somebody else's, people can get hurt.

and sometimes, there's no way to fix what you've done.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

*"You need to choose, **now**."*

With a harsh inhale, confused and frightened, Dream bolts upright.

He flails as he gasps, panicking, his hands fisting cotton sheets, and a thin duvet, a far cry from the bed of leaves and twigs that he had laid upon only moments ago.

Or, at least, what *seemed* like moments ago.

His bedroom in the cabin greets him, and glances at the puddle of sheets he rests under, uncertain.

He *aches*.

The pain is *constant*, and seems to emanate from his entire body, caused by the numerous injuries he had amassed over his time here.

And yet, it feels... *old*.

His wounds do not sting and pulse, or burn. His pain is not fresh. His pain consists of dull aches, throbbing like old injuries, *forgotten bruises, lost memories*.

He blinks, and tries to sit up further, moves to the edge of the bed, weak and exhausted as he clings to the frame, feet aching as they *finally* touch the floor.

“Sap,” he tries.

His voice is soft, broken, like choking on gravel.

He is suddenly aware of just how fucking *thirsty* he is.

He swallows. He tries again.

“*Sapnap?*”

It’s louder this time, still rusted with disuse, but it works. He can hear his friend’s footfalls on the wooden floor, softened by the socks he wears as he runs to him.

He slides a little when he gets to the room, an unfortunate result of the socks.

“Oh, shit,” his eyes widen when he locks eyes with a standing Dream, “*Shit*, uh, give me a second.”

He disappears again, just for a moment, and returns with a bottle of water, which he uncaps and hands to Dream, gently, watching him carefully, his face stunned as he watches him drink, before it crumbles into a mess of *relief*.

Sapnap drags him into a hug, and Dream offers no resistance, shakily exhaling against his shoulder, wrapping an aching arm around his best friend in return.

They sit side by side on the edge of the bed, until Dream finally chokes out—

“Sap, what *happened?*”

Sapnap seems to hesitate. Thinking about the best way to go about whatever he needs to say, *whatever way to rip the bandage off the quickest, whatever way to make the confusion lessen the easiest*.

“I didn’t give him your name.”

Dream shakes his head, frowns, glancing sideways at his best friend.

“Then how—?”

“You were *never* going to die,” Sapnap interrupts with a sigh, “He never would have let you get that far.”

He sighs again, and Dream grips the water bottle just a little tighter. Sapnap continues.

“You were *sick*, sure, but you *weren’t* going to die. When he started saying that— that what he was doing wasn’t working, I was confused. Because, like,” he scratches at his nose, shakes his head in disbelief, like even now he still can’t comprehend it, “You were still in pain, sure. But, you *looked better*. You didn’t seem as bad as before, and— and you had colour in your face and—“

Sapnap swallows.

“When he asked for your name, it was just... *deafening*. All the noises of all these animals, crying out, descending into *chaos*, and it was like they were— *I don’t know*— like they were *warning* us.”

Dream thinks he can still hear the cries in his head. *Primal, afraid, concerned.*

“It just felt... *wrong*. So, I didn’t give him your name. And then he got pissed off,” Sapnap carefully brushes a scab that runs along his cheek, the thin swipe of a knife, not dodged quite quickly enough, “He got *really* pissed off.”

Dream isn’t sure if Sapnap is brave as hell, or just plain *fucking stupid*.

“And *then* he started *panicking*. He tried to convince me a little longer, but with how he’d just reacted, I knew it was a lot bigger than he was letting on,” Sapnap steals the water from Dream’s hands, takes a nervous sip before returning it, “And then when I didn’t give it up?”

He laughs at this, but it’s short, and paired with a roll of his eyes, like it’s not *quite* funny, but *maybe* it would be under different circumstances.

“When I didn’t give it up, he somehow, *miraculously* healed you anyway. And then *I* had to lug your comatose ass all the way back here, because he fuckin’ just... *disappeared*.”

Sapnap shrugs.

“So, my best guess is that his whole plan was to somehow get you to stay, using your name. But, he just wasn’t really planning on me calling him out on it.”

“Names have *power*.”

Sapnap traces the cut on his face once more.

“He’s fucking *fast*, too, *Jesus*. But, he couldn’t let you die. So.”

So.

“I think,” Dream speaks in hushed whispers, gravelled tones, broken glass, “I think he might have placed the snake in my path.”

“Make you sick, so you needed him. Makes sense. He probably didn’t expect you to come home to me first.”

There’s white, hot rage swelling deep in Dream’s veins, tugging at the headache, at the low pains in his body, and he swears, bitter, disgusted.

Sapnap, surprisingly, just shrugs.

“I mean, I get it, kind of. He hasn’t had anyone to talk to in a *long* time. He’s lonely as fuck, and you basically have given him everything he could have asked for in the time we’ve been here,” he pushes hair out of his eyes as he speaks, ignores the way Dream *vibrates* with anger, “It’s kind of understandable that he wouldn’t want to let you go.”

“Are you fucking *kidding me*?”

Sapnap scoffs at his misdirected anger.

“No. I don’t really know how he died, but I know he does have that *scar*,” he traces his neck as he says it, outlines where George’s fatal mark lies, “So the fact that he *trusts* you? It’s probably *huge*. And, it *probably* didn’t help that even though you kept getting hurt, you *always* went back. Kinda

fueled the fire.”

“*Fuck you*, that doesn’t give him the right to keep—“

“I didn’t say it did, *idiot*. I’m just saying, I understand. And besides,” he glances toward a curtained window, “I think he feels bad.”

“And you know this *how*?”

“I keep seeing him at the treeline. Kinda fucking freaking me out honestly.”

Dream pauses.

“Sap, how *long* was I *out*?”

“Eh, it’s kinda hard to say. Time was all fucked up when I was carrying you back.” Sapnap scratches at his face once more, looks up, squinting in thought, “And even then, every now and again you’d kinda get up, and I’d drag you to the bathroom, but I guess you’ve been technically out for like... shit, three days?”

Dream glances toward the window, curtains fluttering with the slightest of breeze. He can’t see outside.

Nobody could see inside either.

It clicks.

“He’s still there, isn’t he. That’s why the curtains are closed.”

He tries to keep his voice level, keep his tone even, but his rage seeps into it, and Sapnap clicks in front of him, garnering his attention.

“Go fight your boyfriend later, dickhead. You need food and a shower. You fucking *reek*. ”

“He’s not my fucking boyfriend.”

His tone is bitter, sour and sharp, and even though Sapnap is not the recipient of those harsh words, he flinches, face twitching in shock.

But Dream does agree with one thing.

He fucking reeks.

Although slightly unstable on his feet, Dream showers.

As the water runs down him in rivulets, he's made aware that all of his bandages and butterfly stitches have been removed.

The bite on his calf is almost non-existent. Aside from the strange silvery scarring, and the odd, faded colouration of his skin, it was like it was never there at all.

And it's not just that.

Cuts are healed into puckered pink scars, previously open wounds sealed back together, weeks of healing sped up, accelerated.

Bruises that had once appeared like storm clouds, dark, dangerous and stark against his skin, are now a mottled conglomeration of faded, mossy yellows and browns, or, simply, *just not there*.

George hadn't just healed the snakebite.

He'd healed everything.

Dream stamps down the desire to be *proud*.

He doesn't make eye contact with the mirror as he dresses.

He avoids his reflection, for fear of seeing George's serpentine eyes in place of his own, for fear he'll wake up, lost in the forest, *forever*.

His stomach *growls*, gnaws at him from the inside, and a wave of nausea passes over him, bile rising in his throat as his stomach contracts, *violent and hungry*, causing reflux.

He ignores it as he passes through the cabin, eyes locked on the front door.

Sapnap is unhappy with his lack of eating, and even unhappier with the way he stalks toward the

door, the force behind each stumbled step.

“Dream, you need to—“

“Later.”

His voice is deadpan, and he’s not sure if Sapnap argues with him or not, because the door slams closed behind him.

He stumbles up the grassy hill, pushes himself toward the treeline, aching and starving, *angry and betrayed*.

When he reaches the trees, there’s no sign of him.

No telltale shimmer, no honey-glazed air.

He’s hiding. He’s scared.

Sapnap’s voice in his head, “I think he feels bad.”

The anger drowns out everything.

In a rage, he calls for him.

“George!”

Birds squawk in return, fluttering in the trees, shocked by his unusual volume, *his abrasiveness, his disrespect for his peaceful surroundings*.

Out of the corner of his eye, he sees him.

George peeks out from behind the wide, mossy trunk of an oak tree, shy, nervous, careful.

Afraid.

It’s a stark contrast to their first meeting.

“I know what you did.”

Dream's words come out in a growl, *feral and angry*, as the *rage* that builds inside of him begins to bubble over, *seeping out of the unsealed edges of his being*.

"The *snake*," he continues, stepping towards the frightened man, the frightened thing, "The *lies*. My *name*."

George sinks. His moonlight skin is flushed, pink with shame, and even in his fury, Dream has to resist the urge to stare.

"I could have *died*, George!"

"No— *No!*" He glances up in shock, eyes wide, frantic, *desperate*, "I wouldn't have let you *die*, I —"

"Oh, and that's *better*? The fact that you would have *trapped* me here, *forever?!?*"

George is beginning to panic.

Dream can see it in the way his eyes flash, anxious, rounded pupils thinning to elliptical slits.

"I shouldn't have—" He admits, taking another step back, like he *isn't* the one with all the power, like he *couldn't* kill Dream if he simply chose to, "The forest told me that I shouldn't—"

"The forest tried to *warn me*."

"I just wanted you to *stay*," and it's soft, so delicate, so honest and Dream—

Dream doesn't care.

"You're a *murderer*," and it's a low blow, feels sick and twisted as it tumbles from his mouth, "No better than the *coward* who hurt *you*."

"That's not—"

"You told me the forest saved you, because it felt *sorry for you*. That you were a *wrong death*. And yet, you were about to do *that* to *me*. I would have been a *wrong death*, just like *you*."

He's *angry*. He's *livid*. And the words, *they don't stop coming*.

He can still hear Sarnap's voice in his head.

Telling him how he understands.

How it makes sense, really.

The anger pushes it down. Pushes down *any* common sense that may have lingered, may have stopped him from saying—

“You’re not human, you’re *dangerous*. You’ll *kill me*. I can’t see you anymore, George.”

George is hyperventilating.

His shimmering hands are *shaking*, and the awkward, sharp teeth have begun to sprout and he’s begging, *pleading*—

“*Dream*— Dream, *please*, I thought— I thought we’d be *happy*, I thought we could—“

He steps around the tree trunk between them. Reaches out, like he might just take Dream’s hands.

Dream doesn’t want him touching him.

“George, just *stop!*”

George *freezes*.

“No,” he whispers, frozen in place, words forced through clenched teeth like *he’s resisting something*—

“*Names have power.*”

“George was actually my *original* name—“

Oh.

“Names have *power, huh?*” The words *bite*, and tears begin to pool in the corners of George’s eyes, iridescent against the glow of his skin, “Is *this* how you were gonna get me to stay?”

“Please, Dream, you don’t—“

“*Go away, George.*”

He takes a hurried step back, clenches his teeth again, *resisting*, shaking his head with vigour.

“Dream, *please, I love you*, please, *don’t go—*“

Dream looks away. Even in his rage, he can’t stand the tears in George’s eyes. Can’t stand how the sorrow tugs at something deeper within him.

“*George, just go away!*”

The shout *rips* from his throat, painful, *powerful*.

There’s a bitter weeping, a sharp bark of hysterical, *sobbing laughter*.

The leaf litter shuffles. Branches break.

And then, there is nothing.

“*Don’t go—*“

The silence of the forest begs him, a lost echo of George’s frantic words.

“*Don’t go—*“

And despite all the rage, *despite the sickening feeling of betrayal, despite the threat of being trapped, lost in the forest forever, despite it all*, in the silence of the forest, Dream thinks he has

never regretted a decision more.

“Don’t go—“

Sapnap tells him he’s an idiot, but he lets him cry when he walks back in the door. He lets him fall to his knees, *lets him sob, and moan, about how it isn’t fair, and why did this have to happen, why did he have to do this, why, why, why.*

“Don’t go—“

The silence from the treeline as he struggles to sleep that night is deafening.

“Don’t go—“

Chapter End Notes

what a ride huh?

first things first though HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO MY FRIEND STEPH!!!! this chapter is all for u and i know u didn’t want a sad one but i am afraid that is Not The Case here
BUT I WILL MAKE UP FOR IT!!!

i really truly hope you guys enjoyed this one!!! and again, i’m so sorry it took so long!!
i got distracted by
things

i adore you all <3

cocoa hooves

Chapter Summary

come on you hermit
why don't you play nice?
why don't you toy with sex and violence?
why don't you stare back
into my huge eye?

why don't you set my wings on fire?

Chapter Notes

you may notice that there has been a rating change and also a few tags added
that is literally for this chapter!!!

cocoa hooves is our second last song, holy crap <3 the lyrics of this track to me seem to reference giving into something dark, giving into something you desire, and regretting past decisions you have once made

also, on a far less philosophical note, it has the lyrics 'sex and violence' in it, so I've literally just run with it

my bad lol

please enjoy!!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Don't go—

The days pass, pass slow, pass painful, pass lonely, George's lost voice frantic in his mind, echoing from the treeline.

Dream hasn't gone back to the woods.

He hasn't even left the cabin.

Which is fine, *really*. He's taken plenty of photographs already. They've got plenty of material. He

doesn't have to.

But his reasoning lies elsewhere. Lies in the fact that he doesn't know what he'd find beyond the treeline.

A man?

Or something more wild? More lost?

Or nothing at all?

The days pass painfully.

The nights pass *worse*.

Dream sleeps poorly.

He is plagued by nightmares, memories of anguish, of regret, of hypocrisy.

He dreams of when he tells George to leave, dreams of the way he'd spat in his face about how what George was doing was sick, was wrong, was cowardly.

He dreams of the hypocritical way that *he* did what he had scolded *George* so vehemently for, *using his name*, something that George had *trusted* him with even in the very beginning, even when he had had *so many doubts* about him, solely because he *liked* Dream, found him *interesting*, found him *amusing*, and because Dream *never once lied*.

He dreams of the broken look on George's face when he violated that trust, the crumpling of his expressions, *the remorse, the regret, the fear*.

He dreams that, this time, when he forces George back into the woods, that he can *never* come back.

Dream keeps finding himself like this, sitting up in sweat-soaked sheets, his body electric with the sensation of fear, of regret.

Each time, he hates himself a little more.

George's plan had been sick, had been twisted and wrong, yes, and Dream had every right to be

mad with him.

But Dream had still crossed a line.

He thinks of the way he had compared George to the man who had taken his life.

Maybe the circumstances were similar, yes, but they were not the same.

George had truly believed his plan had the best intentions behind it. Truly believed that if maybe, he could just make Dream stay a little longer, use his name to make him want to stay, that perhaps everything would be okay.

Perhaps they could be together.

It's an upsetting realisation when Dream slowly begins to understand why George did what he did.

Sapnap has no sympathy for his regrets.

After all, he had tried to explain things, hadn't he? Had tried to make Dream see some reason, see through the red, angry glare that had clouded his vision, clouded his judgement.

The things Dream had said pain him, even days onward. They had been barbed, been cruel.

Dream has nightmares of *killing* George.

Has nightmares of using his name, telling him to leave, to go away, and George sobs, begs, please, and as he does, he crumbles.

He turns to dust in front of Dream.

Other times, he dreams of that first dance. He dreams of the melting forest as George twirls him, of the chorusing shouts of the animals, only this time, they're not warning him, they're warning *George*, warning him of *Dream*, frightened, upset, *afraid*.

When Dream stops spinning, and he looks down, he sometimes finds a bolo knife in his hands, stained and sickening.

Sometimes, he finds George's head.

Those dreams always end in sickness, a race to the bathroom, as the nausea and the fear both fight for purchase.

The nights pass worse.

It's on the final day, the day before they leave, when Sapnap finally, *finally* has enough.

"I am *sick* of this," he hisses between his teeth, as he zips up a suitcase, "Either sort it out, or shut *up*."

Dream glances up in shock, from where he carefully packs away his camera equipment, hands freezing on a lens.

"What?"

"You have done *nothing* but *sigh*, and *cry*, and *bitch*, and I'm *sick of it*, man! Fucking do something about it already!"

"Sapnap, we're leaving tomorrow—"

"Yeah, and I *don't* wanna have to hear you keep *whining* for the next *decade* if you don't get to go say goodbye to your psycho boyfriend," he glares at Dream, "I had to fucking basically *bandage you back together*, remember that? When you basically nearly died on the couch *twice*? No *please*, no *thanks*, and *now* I have to hear you *complaining* all the *time*. I'm *over it* dude, I'm *serious*."

The glare he has fixed on Dream is vicious, hard and upset, but eventually he closes his eyes, sighs, and runs a hand over his features, smoothes away the stress.

"Look, I'm *sorry*. But Dream, can you *please* just think about somebody who isn't *yourself* for once? Do this for everyone's sanity, for god's sake. Mostly *mine*."

He stands up in a huff. Stalks away.

He's right.

He's right, and that's how Dream finds himself *here*.

Finds himself standing just before the edge of the treeline, feet planted firmly on the grassy dirt.

He hesitates. Swallows nervously as he closes his eyes, and hopes George will forgive him for this, for using his name once more.

“George,” he calls into the woods, “*Please*, come and talk to me.”

Names have power.

He keeps his eyes closed for a while, scared to open them, and be faced with nothing.

“Why are you *here*.”

The question is deadpan, and his voice sounds off, but it’s *him*, and Dream lets his eyes fly open.

George stands in front of him, between two young trees, and he looks *awful*.

His serpentine eyes flicker in the sunlight, and Dream can see the way his jaw has shifted to adjust for sharp fangs, pointed teeth, and the distortion his voice makes sense.

Dream thinks he can almost see patterns in the exposed skin of George’s neck and arms, a slight shift in shade, mimicking the scales of a snake, his moonlight skin tainted.

“*You make me want to be human.*”

“*You’re not human, you’re dangerous.*”

George’s humanity has slipped.

It’s all his fault.

But god, he’s missed him so much.

He takes a step forward, and *aches* when George steps back, *aches* when he can see the tears in his eyes.

“I wanted—“ he swallows, “I wanted to come say *goodbye*. I wanted to say *sorry*.”

“*Sorry?*”

George sounds wary, like he can't quite believe it, like he doesn't deserve it, and Dream shivers when those elliptical pupils skim over him, scanning him for a lie.

George's face softens when he can't find one.

“I know why you did it. I *know*,” Dream's voice is choked, “And I'm *sorry*, George, I *am*. But— But, I can't stay.”

And god, how it pains him to say that.

“I just wanted us to be together.”

George's voice is soft, cautious, afraid, and still so tainted with regret, and for the first time, Dream wishes he *could* stay.

Wishes he could leave everything behind.

But he can't.

“I love you,” he says instead, weak, strained, *exhausted*.

George's facial expressions don't change. Dream doesn't even see him check for the lie which isn't there.

“I know you do,” he responds, and he's *shaking*, “That's what makes it *worse*.”

He's shaking so violently, almost convulsing from where he stands, just mere feet away, and Dream can't stand the pain he's putting him in.

“Can I...”

He trails off. He's not sure what he wants to ask for. Just knows he wants George, wants George to want him, wants to ease the pain he's in, the pain they're both in, even if it's only for a moment.

“You *can’t*,” George sobs with the effort of speaking, of pleading, “I’m not *myself*, I’m not in *control*—“

“You won’t hurt me,” Dream insists.

“I’m not worried about *hurting* you, you *idiot*,” and George laughs, but it’s bitter, it’s dark and ugly, twisted around the garbled syllables forced by his teeth, “I’m worried I won’t be able to *stop*.”

Oh.

Oh.

Dream crashes through the invisible border they’ve defined, demolishes the feet of nothingness between them with the weight of his own body as he collides with George, *collides against his animalistic, primal form, collides against his glistening moonlight skin, collides against his wild boy*, and winds his arms around him, pulling him close, bruisingly so.

He cuts his lips on pointed teeth when he kisses him, and minds his tongue as George caves, the energy no longer humming off of him in gentle waves, but radiating off of him with force of a gale, vicious and syrupy as he stops trying to resist, stops trying to hold back.

George nips at his mouth, drawing blood with his fangs, and Dream winces but he doesn’t pull away, only pulls closer as the pain settles somewhere low, somewhere sinful and unexpected. George licks at the wound, apologetic despite his ferocity, his rage and his desperation, and Dream gasps at the way he tastes of blood and earth, rust and dirt, and something honey sweet.

Dream chokes out his sorry’s again, and again, in between kisses, in between rasping breaths and painful, quick inhales of not-enough air.

George *sobs*.

Dream can feel his teeth dissolve, feel the sharp points give way to straight, human teeth as he licks into George’s mouth, desperate to taste him, to make him feel even an *inch* of what he makes Dream feel.

When he gasps, moans, so wrecked, so needy, so human, so pretty, Dream feels his own restraints break.

George’s shirt is worn through with age, faded from the sun, torn and riddled with holes, courtesy of the forest.

It's so easy for Dream to tear.

To rip away the threadbare fabric, to slide his hands across the pale expanse of skin that greets him, run his fingers up along a slender waistline, up, up, over the ribs that peek through moonlight skin, as he leans his head down and mouths at purpled skin, at the thick scar that runs around George's neck, jagged and aggressive.

He mouths at it, *licks at it*, kisses where it stretches, and he hopes to god, to the forest, *to whatever might be listening*, that George can feel the *love*, feel the *apology*, feel the *sorrow* he presses into it.

His bruises *ache*, and as do his healed wounds and beginnings of scars, when George drags them to the earth, pulling them onto their sides into the soft, fertile soil, into the long strands of grass and long dead leaves.

He can feel his slender fingers tugging at the waistline of his jeans, tugging them down with his underwear in one swift motion. He copies the movement, undoes the zip and the button clasp on George's ragged jeans, pulls them down, over those delicious hips, over the prominent bones that press against taut moonlight skin, and he throws his head back when George shifts forward and *grinds*—

Fuck.

Oh god.

Fuck.

He grinds themselves together, and lets out the prettiest little sigh, gravelled with desire, and Dream grinds back, relishing in the way that the electric current under George's skin *hums*—

Oh my fucking god, yes.

He slots their mouths back together, craving the way George's tongue slides against his own as they gasp together, and Dream inhales the dark taste of George's inhale, the taste of bark and maple sap, before he's falling prey to the way George slides his nails up his back in response, leaving deep, painful scratches and *fuck that might even scar*—

Dream hopes it will.

Hopes he has a permanent reminder of *this*, of a constant memory of the way George *feels* flush against his skin, writhing as he reaches down between them, grips both of their cocks in his hand as he *strokes*—

He doesn't think he'll ever forget the noises George makes, the delectable little pleading moans, as they're both reduced to gibberish, as the treeline in front of them begins to melt.

As the sky pulses, from blue to neon pink, as George sinks his teeth into the junction between Dream's neck and shoulders, Dream is so vividly aware of the way that George is losing control beneath him, and he fucking *loves it*.

His wild boy.

All his.

He tells him this, tells George about how it'll never be the fucking same, *how he's so, so sorry, how he'll always, always be thinking of George, how he's tainted everything, how he's never going to forget his perfect, wild boy, how he's never going to want anyone else, never going to be able to*
—

George whines, thrusts up into the hand that grips them, his cock sliding so sinfully against Dream's again, and again, pre-cum slicking the way, the air thick with honey, with the humidity of lust, with the foolishness of a love that *just won't work, and—*

“All yours,” George sobs, “All yours, I love you— *I love you, Dream.*”

It breaks him.

He cums first, a sharp inhale tearing through his throat, filling his lungs so forcefully as he strokes himself through it, grinds against George, the overstimulation almost unbearable as he cums all over the both of them, slicking the hand that grips them, sticking to their abdomens.

George is close behind, and the way his eyes roll back, the way his jaw drops and his soft, pink lips part when he cries—

It's wrong, how *perfect* he looks. How *perfect* he sounds.

They collapse together. Sweaty and filthy in the leaf litter.

Crying.

“... I don't suppose that convinced you to stay,” George laughs, but it falls flat, gets away from

him, "Did it."

It's not a question.

He doesn't need to ask it. He already knows the answer.

Dream holds him closer, wordless, as the tears track his cheeks, and drip from his face, into George's messy hair.

"You could come," he tries not to make it sound like he's begging.

He fails.

"I don't think I could," George admits, fear and longing the basis for his words, "I've been gone so long. I think I'd just... *decay*."

Dream holds him tighter.

Grips his wild boy, afraid that if he pulls away, he'll disappear, he'll crumble into dust, return to the earth and slip from his hands, stolen by the forest in front of them.

"I'll try to come back."

George nestles further into Dream's possessive, protective hold. It hurts how well he fits there, so small and perfect.

"Will you?" He asks.

Dream doesn't know.

Chapter End Notes

i actually wrote the nsfw section of this when i was drunk like, weeks ago, because it's the only time i can really write nsfw with out requiring a strong 5 minute break every time I write a naughty word

i am 21 years old

thank you so much for reading!!! i'm slowly slowly working my way through everyone's comments on the other chapter/other fics and responding, so trust me, I'll get to you soon!!

i love you all <3

ps: i'm still over on tumblr as genofeve !! I'm most active there, but I also have a Twitter (that I never rly use) under gen_ofeve if you'd rather go there!!

much love!! stay safe! also probably dont have sex on the forest floor there's bugs n stuff

Chapter Summary

please, it's not okay
oh, can't you feel your dirty face?
oh, don't it leave that filthy taste?
oh, when you squeeze that life untamed?

Chapter Notes

hi! wow! this is Finally It!

jdnt is the final song of ZABA, and the theme of our final chapter - the song is beautifully haunting, but the end feels oddly hopeful, and I've done my best to try to capture that!!

I truly hope you all enjoy it, and I am so sorry for how long this took me!!!

tw: for minor body horror and death (but only in a dream!) and also brief use of real names (ew lol)

please, enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream has *never* been more uncomfortable in his life.

Up in the canopy of trees, thirty metres from the damp earth below, his too long limbs are twisted into an awkward position, stiff from remaining still in the camouflage of his bird hide. The joints of his bones click as he stretches subtly, and his muscles had begun to ache hours ago.

The aches make him aware of old injuries, the dull, unusual throb in his leg the most distracting of them all.

The pain seems to ebb and flow, pulse and throb, tug this way and that, tug in the direction of somewhere else, *somewhere back in the United States of America*.

The flow reminds him of the current of a stream, rolling over stones, over obstacles, or of the ever shifting imagery of sliding bark, that he has tried so hard to forget over the course of three hundred and sixty five days.

He shakes the thought from himself now, as best as he can.

His leg continues to ache.

The sun has risen over the horizon now, barely peeking through the mass of trees, past the ranges of mountains and hilltops. It bathes everything in a wash of yellow and gold.

With the rising sun, the weather of Central America shifts toward a steady warmth and a thick cloud of humidity settles.

Dream sweats, and it rolls down his forehead, drips into his eyes, but he dares not to move, to risk blowing his camouflage this close to the time they need.

He also refuses to look down, down at the sheer drop to the forest floor. The harness that keeps him safe does nothing to soothe his anxieties, and he has trembled continuously, all night long.

He breathes slowly now, to try to settle his shaking and regulate his nervous lungs.

The thick clouds in the distance threaten rain, and yet, even with this level of humidity, Dream knows hoping for any is almost pointless in the dry seasons of Costa Rica.

As the sun continues to rise, the golden light of dawn awakens the forest, and the chorus begins.

Loud, and vigorous, the forest wakes up, the song of birds calling to one another, announcing their place to those around them, squeaks, squawks and hoots of all pitches and tones echoing throughout the air.

In a tree across from him, out from a knotted hole in the trunk, a bird cautiously pokes its head out.

Its chest is a vibrant yellow, and its beak is long and curved, a myriad of colours painting the length of it, shades of green, to blue, to red.

Dream's camera shutter clicks rapidly, as the toucan cries out, and begins to hop from tree to tree, ruffling its feathers after gliding a short distance.

More follow, a small cluster of five of the vibrant birds gathering, and Dream feels the corners of his lips twitch up into a smile as he continues to photograph them.

The toucan's are beautiful.

But they are not what he came here for.

His eyes lock onto another knot in the tree across from him, this one further down, and slightly on an angle from his hide.

“Come on,” he whispers, and aims his gaze down the lens.

In his head, he pleads that tips of the locals were correct, that this was the spot he had been searching for, that *something else* had begun to move into the abandoned nest, one that had once belonged to a family of toucans.

“Come on, *come on.*”

The sweat stings his eyes.

The old bite on his leg throbs.

The year old injury on chest stings.

Dream is *painfully* aware of just how tired he is when—

It happens.

A feathered head peeks out of the knot in the tree, and Dream inhales, awed.

An emerald colour paints the feathers that crown her head, and as she darts out of her hide, onto a nearby branch, Dream finally, *finally*, takes the photograph.

The quetzal preens her jewelled feathers and hops, revealing a scarlet patch at the base of her long, elegant tail.

The locals were correct.

She is beautiful, and she is worth all the heights, and all the aching limbs in the world.

Absently, Dream wonders what George would think of her.

He bites the thought in half quickly, jamming his finger on the button of his camera with a little more force than necessary.

He watches her, memorises her regal appearance and her graceful motions, and then she is gone, taking flight from her home, heading in search of food.

He misses her already.

The radio attached to his belt is grasped for, and with shaky hands, he activates it.

“Sap,” he croaks, voice trembling with layers of excitement for the quetzal, and fear for the heights, “Sap, you guys awake down there?”

There’s a pause, and Dream repeats himself, nervous.

The radio crackles to life.

“Yeah man, we’re here. What’s up?”

He can’t help the feral grin that spreads across his face, pleased and confident, cocky and self-assured.

“I got it.”

Sapnap’s excited woops come in clear and loud, echoed faintly by the laughter of the rest of their small team, and a few scattered cheers from very friendly locals.

Dream laughs, and he hates to cut them short but—

“Now, can somebody *please* fucking get me down?”

The laughter grows louder, but they agree.

As Dream carefully packs up his gear from his position in the hide, eagerly awaiting to stretch his legs, and feel firm ground underneath him once more, he closes his eyes a moment, rests them from their strain, caused by a brutal combination of lack of sleep, and staring down a lens for far too long.

He is exhausted, weak, sore and aching, and he is hyper aware of the dull throb in his calf once more, the pain far away and too close all at once, *an absolutely nonsensical sensation*.

Despite having this opportunity, an opportunity to photograph a beautiful endangered species of bird, an opportunity to travel to places he had once dreamed of, for having this opportunity *and succeeding*, Dream isn't sure why his happiness still feels so *hollow*.

The radio crackles once more.

Dream prepares to descend, in silence.

The night before they fly home, Dream sleeps poorly.

This isn't anything new.

Dream never sleeps well anymore. He hasn't for a year.

Before he sleeps, he thinks of George, all sharp angles and soft, moonlight skin, and he *aches*.

At times, when he sleeps, he is plagued by visions of the woods, *of hummingbirds and dogwood trees, of otters and alligators, of grass that breathes, and leaves that cycle through the colour wheel, of bark that melts and slides*.

He feels like he's being *watched*.

Sometimes, he never finds what's gazing at him.

Other times, he spots the mountain lion, peering at him through the underbrush, eyes golden and curious.

And sometimes, it's George.

Behind the wide trunk of an oak tree, he spies on him.

When George appears, Dream's visions dissolve into nightmares.

This is one of those nights.

He is forced to watch, as he reaches out for George, as he demands he come with him, as he tugs him over the treeline.

He is forced to watch, as George begins to crumble, fingertips turning to dust, falling apart the further they get from the forest.

He is forced to watch, as George begs for them to stay, and Dream drags him from the trees.

He is forced to watch, as finally, George dissolved into ash and nothing more, milkweed flowers springing from his crumbled body.

Monarch butterflies feast upon the flowers that grow from George's death.

Dream wakes up screaming, shaking, tangled in his bed sheets as Sapnap crouches over him, nudging him awake from the throws of his nightmares, hushing him.

Dream sobs, chest heaving, and Sapnap's hand is cool and comforting against his bare shoulder.

"I could hear you from my room. Must have been one *hell* of a nightmare."

He pauses.

"Him again?"

Dream nods.

Sapnap sits on a space next to Dream's tangled legs.

"You still miss him, don't you?"

"I shouldn't," Dream hisses, "It's been a *year*, and he nearly fucking *killed me*."

"Something you forgave him for," Sapnap shrugs.

"Yeah, I guess I did," Dream hesitates, sighs, "It was hard not to. All he had was good intentions."

"They say the road to hell is paved with those."

Dream thinks he's already there.

He sighs once more.

"I *do* miss him, though. I miss him more than I should, and I don't think it'll ever go away."

"You're gonna go back, aren't you?"

Dream freezes, caught.

"It's— It's not something I've really considered."

"You've *always* been a shitty liar."

Dream laughs, bitter, thinks of George, examining him, head tilted, searching for lies.

"I can't leave you, Sap."

"So I'll come with you."

"No, I couldn't ask—"

"You're not *asking*, I'm *telling*, " Sapnap rolls his eyes, "We've been practically loaded since Nat Geo picked us up and started funding us. We'll buy the *stupid* cabin, we can stay there and I'll see you when you get tired of having *weird forest sex* and getting *dirt* stuck in your—"

"*Sap*—"

“— *pants*. I was gonna say pants.”

Dream hesitates.

“What about work?”

“What *about* work? We’ll do what we always do, we’ll travel.”

“I won’t be able to *leave*, Sap.”

Sapnap shrugs.

“George only couldn’t leave because he was *tied* to the forest. You’re not dead, last I checked.”

“He could *kill* me.”

“He *could*,” another shrug, “But I don’t think he will.”

“Why?”

“Because you came back. He only wanted to kill you originally so he could have you. You, coming back? That’s proof he has you. And if you come back once, you’ll come back again.”

It’s possible.

“Maybe.”

“*Maybe*,” Sapnap echoes, “Man, will you *ever* admit that I’m right?”

That forces a chuckle from Dream, and he can almost feel the tension leave the air as his best friend joins him.

“You’ve thought about this,” Dream accuses.

“‘Course I have. Sick of your ass waking me up. I need beauty sleep, you know.”

There’s a caring tone to his harsh words, and Dream smiles, soft.

“Now,” Sapnap stands up, stretches, “Since we’re up, we have a cabin to buy.”

“What if it’s not for sale?”

Sapnap scratches his head, awkwardly.

“It is. I *know* it is,” he won't meet Dream’s gaze, “I checked a week ago.”

The dirt road to the cabin is longer than Dream remembers, and each bump jostles his pains.

But the closer they get, the easier the pain becomes.

When the cabin comes into view, Dream can’t feel any pain at all, but he swears his heart might stop.

From the windows of the car, he peers at the darkness of the treeline, his eyes straining as they search the moonlight for a glimpse of a glowing boy, his wild boy.

He sees nothing.

His heart clenches.

The sold sign out the front of the cabin no longer seems hopeful.

As he unpacks, slow and methodical, careful with each item, lost in his thoughts, Sapnap is a whirlwind of energy, unpacking the food from town into cupboards.

From the window, the treeline seems to watch them.

Dream stares back at it.

“Go to sleep.”

“What?”

Sapnap claps him on the shoulder.

“It’s late. You’re spacing. The whole place is furnished, so go to sleep. You can go find him in the morning.”

“But I—“

“I’m *not* letting you go out to get eaten by a bear or something, dude.”

How unreasonably fair.

So Dream obeys.

This time, when he sleeps, there are no nightmares.

He sees the deer, curled underneath the dogwood tree, and her kind, soft eyes welcome him home.

She keeps the nightmares away.

He sleeps well, for the first time in a year.

When he wakes, he wastes no time, showering and eating breakfast quickly.

Sapnap helps him to pack his bag, and when they hug goodbye, it’s tight, nervous.

“Don’t die,” his best friend tells him.

“I’ll try not to,” Dream had offered back.

The grass along the trail is overgrown, long and tall, and Dream watches his steps, cautious, nervous lest he see the scales of something that *does not belong*.

He wonders if George would even want him anymore.

But the treeline welcomes him, the sound of rustling branches and beating wings acting as a greeting.

The breeze kisses his cheek, as if he were an old friend.

“I missed you, too,” Dream whispers to the woods.

He swallows, nervous, his backpack heavy against him, and he calls—

“George?”

There is nothing.

“*George?*” He croaks, once more.

There is still no response, no sound of breaking branches, no sound of careful footsteps.

Nothing.

He grows anxious, and he calls again, *and again*, as he stumbles through the woods, tripping over tree roots.

Where is he?

Images of crumbled dust and monarch butterflies flicker in his mind, and Dream winces, feeling ill.

What if...?

He begins to panic.

The tears prick at the corner of his eyes, and as one slips, falls to the dirt beneath his feet, he cries out, once more, desperate.

“Geor—?”

Something slams into him, *hard, heavy*, clinging to his side as Dream tumbles to the ground under the weight of the assault, and he scrambles for purchase in the dirt, beetles scurrying away from his flailing hands as he finally looks up and—

Looks into serpentine eyes, into elliptical pupils that round out, becoming human the longer they stare into him, and from a mouth that Dream has only seen inside his mind for a year, a soft voice murmurs—

“You came back.”

“How could I *not*?” Dream laughs, broken, as he rests his palm against George’s cheek, revelling in the gentle electricity that hums under his touch, “I couldn’t *breathe* without you.”

George layers his hand over Dream’s, and he knocks him down once more, leaving him breathless, *insane, wild*, as he presses their mouths together in a kiss that is *far* too gentle for a being such as he.

“Breathe with me now, Dream,” he laughs as he pulls away.

Dream inhales.

Dream exhales.

He swallows, uncertain, before—

“*Clay*,” he offers.

George tilts his head, calculating, confused.

“My name.”

George’s soft, pink lips mouth the synonyms of his name, pondering, shocked, uncertain, tasting them upon his tongue.

He will find no hint of a lie.

“*Clay.*”

He repeats it, and it comes out like a sigh, and Dream shudders at the honey-like sensation that oozes over him, at the raw *energy* that crackles at his name.

The sky pulses above them.

Dream has never known pain.

“*My wild boy,*” he murmurs against George’s moonlight skin, “*I’ve missed you so much.*”

Chapter End Notes

it’s over, GOD i am going to MISS THIS FIC SO MUCH

thank you to everyone who read the whole way through, who enjoyed it, who commented, who left kudos, everything!!

you’ve all been angels <3

ps: here are lyrics from some bonus inspiration tracks i used for writing this that AREN’T from zaba!!! (wow)

alt j - breezeblocks

please don’t go, i’ll eat you whole, i love you so, i love you so

rainbow kitten surprise - devil like me

is the devil so bad if he cries in his sleep, while the Earth turns?

the alan parsons project - eye in the sky
the sun in your eyes, made all of the lies worth believing

culprate - whispers pt 1
touch of the skin brings trembles and shivers, wrapped in love, brought to life

alt j - every other freckle
you're the first and last of your kind

crooked colours - i hope you get it now
i know it exists, only seen a glimpse, feel your soul drift

as always, I'm genofeve on tumblr, and you've been beautiful <3

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!